

Bonds And Boundaries

By Samantha Rinne Hooker

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Author's Note

I have decided to change some of the original text, as needed. Some of this is to try to make my message less contradictory and more consistent. You see, when I started writing *Mune Shinri*, I was in a different place than when I finished writing *Aiken no Michi*, and still different from when I now write the last part of the anthology.

Each part of this anthology has a different purpose. There is plenty of rough thoughts, pop culture references, and bizarre word capitalization. But the point of all this starts with a question. I was lost and in despair one day during a field trip, and considered crashing into a wall, when I stopped myself. I decided to live until I helped at least one person. My teachings are rough, and sometimes odd to conventional society. And some of it seems to be a lot of nonsense and fake symbolism.

Anyway, that's how I wrote it.

The *Mune Shinri* teaches the "heart truth", that is, it encourages one to begin thinking about religion in general and its purpose. In my life, I have met far too many people who either tell religious people they can't be sure of what they believe (often while blindly trusting science that hasn't yet been proven) or make blanket statements about "all religion" does this, having only encountered Western monotheism. Uhhhh, I think you'll be shocked to find that not all religion has a single central deity, not all religion even has a deity, and religions differ vastly on the concept of wrongdoing or sin. Nevermind that the Afterlife varies from nonexistent, to a shadowy area where everyone goes no matter how good or bad, to two (or more) destinations, to reincarnation or rebirth. Although I did insert some of my own beliefs in here, the point was to encourage actual thought.

Aiken no Michi is the "path of Aiken." This is the core faith of what I believe, and you will notice that it is in fact pretty opinionated. In particular, I reject much of what has been going on in 2020. I also I reject the idea of working solely for money. Money is a great temptation, but far too many people miss out on time with friends and family. Honestly, here there was a sort of suicidal tone to the work. I was struggling with depression, and it shows. I ultimately concluded that if you are depressed, the best thing you can do is try to figure out what you can do during this life, neither claiming that suicide should always be avoided nor telling people it's okay.

Lastly, we have the third book. Unfortunately, I keep changing what this part is to be about, so let's have it open-ended for now.

Mune Shinri

Zero Objects Document

MUNE SHINRI

Part 1: Teachings

This text is written as a melding of the beliefs of Shintoism, Christianity, and Taoism. The words of this book are subject to change by its author. There is no one Mune Shinri, but rather each person is writer of their *own* Mune Shinri (or “heart truth”) just as each person has their own religion or worldview. This is *my* Mune Shinri. You may make yours by writing in the spaces on each page. This is a minor update, mainly to reorder.

MUNE SHINRI

Evil Genius

Before we get to specific teachings, let's clear something up. Much of the effort certain groups who dislike religion's effect on the world is spent on disproving the existence of God, or something of the sort. Why? Fear of the unknown, fear of death, or fear of control. This is fine too, the primary rule of this religion is religious acceptance. If this were not so, we have a cult, and having accidentally gotten into a cult for two days, I hate cults. Still, I would defend the opposite. Suppose someone is trying to convince you that the universe exists. And, outside of Reality, all that would exist is the white blankness of nonexistence. With me so far? Now, while you could possibly prove that Reality does not exist and probably the one you're dreaming in infinite regression, someone is fooling you. That someone might be God, yourself, some rational scientific creation origin, or something freakish like Cthulhu, that isn't the real issue. The fact is, the deception or what we call "reality", (and even if it's not real, this doesn't change the argument) exists as evidence of the deceiver, what we call a "Creator" or "God". Or in simple terms, a clay pot cannot be made without someone gathering clay, and firing the kiln. Even if you automate it with a machine, someone had to build the machine. That would be my logical proof for religion. Because from here, you can believe in anything, including a purely scientific Creator. God is a Cause, not merely a Being. Also, it is important that you understand that God is not evil. God produces good and bad fortune, but the overall effect if for your long-term growth. Other thought on this is false belief.

Revision

Years have passed since I first wrote this book, and many of my beliefs have changed. The world around me has changed too. Aside from debate against atheism, the biggest beef that I have of any religion is with Islam. Although there are obvious criticism, the real problem is that the book itself practices a doctrine called abrogation, which boils down to throwing out old text. While believing in abrogation, the Quran as tries to pass itself off as the infallible word of God. These two are mutually exclusive, to say nothing of the fact that declaring anything as infallible within the confines of religion is incredibly destructive.

The Mune Shinri is my personal beliefs, and they have developed over time, but I reject abrogation. For this reason, I leave previous versions around. This also means that different text versions may have widely different messages, as I reconsider ideas. This does not mean the earlier texts were wrong, simply that they are wrong for me.

I believe that religion means to "reconnect" and that no, God did not tell me anything from a burning bush, but it would be a poor example to teach violence, control, or abuse. I will reject secular or religious groups that govern by force.

On Thoreau

Jack London is portrayed as some great outdoorsman, but he died in a country cottage of alcoholism. Thoreau acted like he was living outside civilization, but actually was supported by his friends in town, and was a massive hypocrite. I myself live with my folks, and it is unlikely that most writers can really exist on true outskirts. This is not, therefore, a sort of "be a rugged individualist" nonsense, but a basic concept of that perhaps one day, things will become bad and people will need traditional values, and learn to hunt, fish, and live outdoors. This book is to encourage people to actually try to learn useful skills, to be better able to make decisions for themselves.

MUNE SHINRI

Section 1: Theory of the World

MUNE SHINRI

Lesson I-Being

Beings were forged out of five major elements; Fire forged them from God's essence, Water hardened the forge, Earth gave them substance, Wood gave them unique soul from the Creator, Wind gave them air to breathe. We were made in God's five natures, given faith, trained in the knowledge of good and evil, thus we show our praises. In addition, each of us was given a spirit with the power to do miracles. God is both God and Force, it is the Soul or Heart of a person, and it is Nature. How do common objects exist without design? The life of Light is dedicating oneself to work or to selfless acts; the life of Dark is enjoying the pleasures of life or self. The True Life is neither, it is spending one's moments in the company of others solely to be in the company of others.

Lesson II- Cosmos

The purpose of religion is to "reconnect." If the follower fails in this, it is their failing, but if the teachings themselves fail, the religion is a cult. What is believed is personal, but it is the choice to believe which is important. All faiths should believe in loving others as though loving themselves. Not all do, though. I believe a God controls the Gogyou (five elements), and well as the forces of light and darkness. In addition, I recognize angels of heaven and spirits of earth. There may also be Reapers and powerful human agencies which guide the world behind the scenes.

I feel God is created in our image, both Male and Female; therefore, He may become She whenever He wants. He was not created, but She birthed herself. That is why He endures throughout all time. I trust God created Heaven and Earth out of formless Nothing, and thus it is our mission to create, to love, and to preserve those creations we treasure. We are You. The world you perceive as part of reality is a mirror of your own strengths and insecurities. Live life as you would want it, not according to guilt.

Lesson III- Nature

Nature does its work in such a way that it is adequate in itself, and yet gradual. People try to improve nature, and have yet to find a way. Master life first, then you will understand why this is so. Science is not inherently evil, there is evil in using science to destroy nature. Find the reason nature persists, and devote your life to keeping it in balance with the progress of the age. There are two types of nature, your nature and the nature of the world. Delight yourself with both. Walk in the forest, and study your own self.

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Lesson IV-Nonviolence

It would be a mistake to say that violence is okay. This was the failing of Islam, the founder decided that for criticizing his faith, he wanted his followers to be able to kill others. While I have learned from life that absolute nonviolence is possibly unrealistic, I do not condone violence and will not excuse any potential followers saying that I said it was okay. Neither do I believe in gun control. Disarming oneself makes you a victim.

There are those such as soldiers and police who carry weapons, who defend the nation we live in, just as civilians need to be able to carry weapons to defend from a nation which has become corrupt, or to defend against murderers and thugs.

I say, defend, however. There are those who rationalize defense as invading another country. This is nonsense. The purpose of learning to use a weapon is to defend ones own life or keep safe loved ones such as mother or father, spouse, or pets from those that seek to harm, and will not stop until someone is dead. But given the choice, it is more appropriate to exhaust debate, nonlethal force to subdue, and outer defenses such as walls first. There are also means to deflect harm, such as judo. Ultimately, I cannot stop another from using violence if they feel their life is in danger or it is their job to protect others, but it is important to remember the expression, "Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world." This by the way is not a Muslim expression, it's Jewish. Violence is like karate as spoken by Mr Miyagi. Having a situation where people are "sorta" allowed to be armed, sooner or later, you get squished. Violence is not necessary, but you must decide whether to act and what to protect.

Jesus teaches us to love our neighbors, defining a neighbor as the "one who shows mercy" and to be one to others. Jesus also teaches us to love our enemies, but love is not appeasement, for appeasement is fear not love. It is like the distinction between appeasing a violent drunk and loving them. A person who appeases, gives the drunk more alcohol, allowing them to continue being a violent drunk, enabling them. A person who loves others, loves them enough to try to stop them. Notice, I didn't say kill. Killing is always a last resort, when life is in danger and all other discourse and other defenses have failed. Just as you do not shoot drunks, you do not kill people for believing a certain way, but you do stop them from abusing themselves and others.

Lesson V - Balance

A life in balance is important. Many religions teach some sort of moral law or other, but in terms of values, I believe this is unhelpful. The Buddha and Lao Tzu both saw extremes in behavior, from perfect ease that comes from ruling class to poverty and suffering. Too much ease breeds decadence, too much suffering breeds desperate action. In the same way too much morality paradoxically creates people who believe they are already doomed anyway, so they act out, as surely as too little creates lawlessness. Live with principles, but remember the value of grace, that you are blessed even if you feel unworthy.

This is also true of values. If one is too extreme, they risk creating assassins. If they are too much of a pacifist, it is an invitation for others to crave their land. Balance and a sensible nature are important in all things.

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Lesson VI-Outcasts

Do not shun people because they do not appear to belong. Whether they believe differently, or have different sexual natures, or any else, this is not the issue. The proper temple welcomes people, not cast them out, as they have already experienced from the world. Whatever you hate in others, you actually hate about yourself. The world you perceive, is the world that is real to you, because reality is a mirror of your own sense of worth.

Treat others with love, as they are you. Whatever you reject, you reject about yourself. All deserve acceptance and love. All deserve the right to be joined to their soulmate, male, female, or otherwise. There is no reason to treat another as strange. This is not to say people are entitled. But a person ought to be judged on their actions, not on their differences. The only thing to exclude is poor behavior. If a person rapes or kills, we do not invite them to our house. But ideally, everyone who repents of their actions is welcome.

Years have passed, and I no longer believe this a problem of the church. At least, not alone. The secular world practices "tolerance" while secretly hating others. In the church, the problem stems from using the secular world as a model for acceptance of others. The church must develop its own model to show the secular world how to improve.

Lesson VII- Customs

Many religions have complex customs, and indeed earlier drafts laid out everything from clothes to wear, to food to eat, to various details concerning marriage ceremonies. I have aged since previous drafts, and somehow clothing doesn't seem to matter as much, and I have come to realize that these things largely get in the way of spirituality. Worse, the world reflects your failings. Cults and evil religions impose dress codes on people, food prohibitions create zealous extremes. The only customs one should keep is their own values, not rules to subjugate others. In fact, one should probably shun any system that tries to keep its workers in line by forcing them to wear clothing. I particularly hate the following due to their close resemblance to other things: masks (muzzles), neckties (noose), collars (well, collars), and to a lesser extent bracelets or anklets (arm or leg manacles). But even identical costumes are an attempt to break down individuality.

In terms of dress code, short of stark nudity (and only because in most places, it is illegal) anything is allowed. You want to crossdress? No one more than me is okay with defying gender norms. You want to wear black hooded robes? Carry around a sword everywhere? It's okay with me! If we have to make a list of forbidden things, I would say that I object to masks, bracelets/anklets, piercings, and tattoos more than other things. Masks because they are symbols of deception and resemble dog muzzles to prevent breathing or speech, bracelets because they resemble manacles, piercings because they are often attached to the noses of pigs to better grab a hold of them, and tattoos because they resemble the brands given to animals to mark their ownership. All of these things are barbaric symbols of slavery. However, if you can make a tattoo look cute, or pull off a look with some anklets or earrings, that's fine I guess. I just object to the connection to slavery. Style is about freedom, and that includes the freedom to wear cross earrings in full awareness that the cross was a sign of Roman oppression.

If someone infringes on your values, tell them politely yet firmly that this behavior is not okay with you. Above all, make your own choices.

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Gogyou

The Gogyou are the five elements. Classically, they were Wood, Metal, Earth, Fire, and Water. Each of these had an association with different bodily organs, seasons, and even personality types. It was a system of dividing history into a series of cycles, as well as a way of understanding certain patterns. I have changed this to Wood, Fire, Earth, Wind, and Water. Why? Well, two reasons. First, I think this is about natural cycles but Metal represents a human action, and secondly, Metal doesn't strike me as a real element.

Wood represents new growth (early Yang), and is the start of new things, it is a sort of impulsive almost childish energy. Fire is what happens when things come to their limit (peak Yang), much like a forest that gets overcrowded and burns down to clear space. Earth is what things are like in a state of balance (Yin/Yang), much like a forest filled with ashy soil. Wind represents decay and corruption, much like a forest filled with ash, rocks, and other debris that blows over all the trees, or a desert; this is the beginning of decay of government or nature or anything that exists (early Yin). Finally, when things decay to a certain point (peak Yin), they are literally or metaphorically washed away. This in turn restarts the process.

As you can see, this is a means of understanding cycles of history. But it also represents the interaction with people and systems. For instance, certain people are gentle like water, have a hot nature like water, or are grounded like earth.

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Fire

You strive with a fullness of energy that impresses others, but you must remember to channel your emotions properly. Will acts from personal choice.

Water

You tend to rely on more subtle pressure to get things done, but you must not meddle too much. Delicacy tends to follow orders for the praise of others.

Earth

Your peers tend to love and hate you for your consistency on issues, but they know you best for your loyalty. Duty tends to follow orders dictated by one's own soul.

Wood

You speak and act only as you deem necessary, but you often don't know how to show your true emotions and people assume you are cold and uncaring. Need acts after asking permission from others.

Wind

You strive with a randomness of energy that confuses others, but you must remember that a true individual acts as he wants even if others are doing it. Choice hears both sides first.

MUNE SHINRI

Two Forces

Light

The positive force of the Yin-Yang. This represents love of others. Use this for restoring order. This represents order rather than good, but it may exorcise demons, as possession represents chaos.

Dark

The negative force of the Yin-Yang. This represents love of self. Use this for the fluidity of dreams. Unlike most religion, Dark does not represent evil but another side of the natural world, as life and death are two sides. True evil is only that which is unnatural.

MUNE SHINRI

Section 2: The Temple

MUNE SHINRI

Name of Temples

Aiken is the name of this religion, and the name of its temple is a Traveler Welcome Home. Because this is what it is, a place where you can wish a wanderer “Traveler, welcome home.” The ideal goal of a religious institution should not be proselytize, judge, or anything of that sort. But rather, people come to a temple for healing, for renewal, and to be welcomed by others.

These are to be designated as free places to stay the night, although donations may be made to support the functioning of the temple. If anyone wishes to be healed, priests would be trained in first aid. Books for reading from multiple religions would be shelved for those who want to study.

Essentially, it is a place of comfort, and respecting the boundaries of others.

As a side note, I no longer believe that temples should be on a sort of socialist welfare. Temples should be exempt from taxes, provided they are not in defiance of the state. But “render under Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God what is God's.” A temple should earn its keep, and give back, not to the government but to God.. Likewise, those who stay the night do not pay monetarily, but agree to work (help cook, work on the farm, etc) in exchange for a free place to stay.

Temple Society

The service is led to its system by 7 priests; there is no ranking system to avoid clerical politics. As to decision making, the priests of the four main elements vote on the temple position and in the lay have majority vote, the decision that the lay makes it passed as it is; the priests must have unanimous vote of all seven priests to do the same. The priest of light writes down the basic vote of the priests, and the priest of dark writes down the lay decision. The priest of wood attempts to reconcile two decisions into one decision, which is voted on by the seven priests to pass or fail. If there is a similar voting pattern 3 times by the priests, the priests are excised as corrupt.

At least, that's originally what I thought. Then I saw a temple that seemed to have seven priests (on rotation), and it didn't strike me as any better or worse than a regular church. And then I saw the church during COVID getting shut down by the bishops and other hierarchy. Now, I don't believe in the necessity of priests, except to lead services and give sermons. Even that can be done by volunteers. I believe instead that we should reject ordination based on the succession of bishops, and rather regard the priests as chosen by God if they seem to lead the people in a right direction. Not self-proclaimed, but based on congregation acceptance. The temples should regard anyone as a priest. Because anyone can be a priest, anyone can marry people.

It is important to remember that regardless of how a temple is run, this temple cannot exist properly as long as a tax state exists. Just as Jesus asked to show the coin when he gave his famous “give to Caesar that which is Caesar's,” and found that the priests had the coin (while he himself did not), it is important to remember that priests can become tools of the state. Religion and state are intended as separate from each other. This is not to say that the religion is in political opposition to the state, but that any temple should stay out of politics entirely, neither being tools of the state nor in defiance of it, but rightly cautious of political interference. Ideally, a temple would have no property taxes, and be used to house and care for those who are without means. Likewise, state should not impose political standards of conduct on the temple, or be guilty of misuse.

When temples are forbidden, you are able to hold services in the home, or even outdoors. The building is not important, only the gathering of people in worship. Nor are priests nor sermons necessary for worship. The day may come when these come to an end.

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Temple Life

The temple is built so that it may double as a temple and a monastery. Anyone who meets once a week is lay, anyone who stays 5 nights a week or more is a monk or priest. The front entrance leads to the temple hall where worship is held, and then there are rooms upstairs and downstairs from the main floor. Simple objects are permitted in the rooms, such as books and writing materials. A person is permitted a computer as long as it is portable. Personal property is not the issue, but human dreams are crucial to following God of one's own will. At most extreme, any monk is allowed one book of their own possession, their own bank account (which is not used on premises, but neither is given over to monastery except under the monk's own choice), their wallet and keys, and one object related to their own hobbies. Other books and movies are part of the library, to be rented. There should be time in each day set up for one's own hobbies, and time should be also granted on the Sabbath to visit the nearby towns. A person "should be in the world, but not of the world," meaning the monk exists in the world and should visit it, but does not need to be motivated by its desires. As much as possible, a temple should be built so it does not incur a great amount of property debts or bank debts. It should be built by its members.

Abstinence is not seen as a virtue, as it draws away from both natural life and a loving relationship with humanity. However, and "sleeping around" is discouraged. To abstain is a choice, to pursue more spiritual matters. But all humans are of the spirit of God, so rejecting people to be closer to God does not make sense. It is your choice, though.

The temple is in no way gender separated, as both are active worshippers, so rooms alternate. The rooms are set up according to bonds by families or social groups, but two-person rooms may be rented during private times, and likewise solitary rooms for need to be alone.

Weekday ritual includes not simply worship but daily farming, as the monastery reveres nature, as well as having to feed itself.

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Temple Service

As Aiken is open ended, services really only take place as a celebration of an event. The service itself is designed with a few simple rituals to commemorate the event, then worship is open to whatever prayers or concerns people have. The idea is mainly to enjoy the festivities though, unless it is of serious import.

In a service, candles and sources of flame are largely abstained from. The soul of Aiken is like wood, the flame comes from followers on hearts. The temple is designed to draw in light without such things, and so only night services, like All Saints Day have use of flame. Fire is for community, heat, light, comfort, and forging tools. The religion of Aiken is about harmony with nature and balance and renewal, not purity or light. If it makes people feel welcome or comfortable, go with it, for fire does help with the above. But it is important to remember, religion is about connection, just as vines grow together.

Temple Schedule

Monday-Friday

6AM-7AM: Wake up/Prepare for the day

7AM-8AM: Morning Prayer

8AM: Breakfast

9AM-5PM: Chores/Volunteering/Work/Etc.

(NOON-12:30PM: Lunch Break)

6PM-7PM: Dinner

7PM-9PM: Worship *

9PM-10PM: Reading

10PM: Sleep/Private

Saturday

7AM-8AM: Wake up/Prepare for the day

8AM: Breakfast

9AM-5PM: Personal Travel/Private Time

6PM-7PM: Dinner

7PM-9PM: Worship *

9PM: Sleep/Private

Sunday

6AM-7AM: Wake up/Prepare for the day

7AM-9AM: Breakfast

9AM-NOON: Sunday Devotion (Temple is open to public)

NOON-1PM: Lunch

1PM-2PM: Worship *

2PM-5PM Community Events

5PM-6PM: Social Time

6PM-7PM: Dinner

7PM: Sleep/Private

* Worship can be divided into either book reading of holy books, meditation, or other activities.

Each person has beliefs unique to them, and different worship style. In addition, the mystics practice Aiken martial arts for their hour of worship.

MUNE SHINRI

Division of Services

Each service is designed so people can attend at any day they want, since the temple is never closed. That said, there is a set schedule of the service itself. The time of the service is not precise, despite the schedule, since breakfast and lunch are after them. Still, there is a typical format to each service:

Prayers

Reading

Announcements

Offerings

Confession (This not like a Catholic confession. It is more the Episcopalian style, where you confess that you have sinned, and then are forgiven)

Sermon (Optional)

Peace

Blessing and Dismissal

Despite the format ostensibly being similar to Christian, these take place in a timeless fashion, that is, one can come at any time during the service and do these in any order. A sermon can be added, but is optional.

Division of Worshipers

Due to the emphasis on welcoming all manner of worshipers, since it is a personal religion, devoted to loving others for their own sake, there are several types of worshipers:

Monks (Permanent/semi-permanent residents)

Visitors (Meet a few days a week, typically for services)

Priests (Permanent, guide ceremony or services, officiate weddings)

Mystics (Permanent/semi-permanent, participate in Aiken training)

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Offerings

The temple balances personal worship with charity, allowing what one believes to help others. For this reason, any offerings aside from those needed to upkeep of the temple and its farm are put back on the plate, and the rest is offered freely back toward feeding or helping any who ask. That which is needed to support the temple, the farm, and the monks/priests, is put directly into the bank so as to have monetary security.

The rest is open plate, and thus the monks should keep no fear of being stolen, for the offering is open to any who need it. The temple for this reason does not lock its doors, or even possess locks in any but the bedrooms, for they never close their gates, having nothing more important than the lives of its disciples.

Yes, some people may take without asking. Impress upon them that this money is reserved for them in the first place. There is no need to hurt or threaten others to gain what you need.

MUNE SHINRI

Temple Layout

The temple that I envision is literally heart-shaped. To the right side is the living quarters, libraries, and social hall. To the left are its kitchen, temple supplies, and the temple itself, joined together by a passageway. I envision it able to run on its own power, instead of on the electric grids, using materials farmed or forested from the grounds itself. I see this temple taking and giving back to the land around it, and I see it using its own power.

Yet this temple may not be built until either taxes no longer exist, or we live in a world that has infinite resources, where such a thing may be built without restraint. This has less to do with ideals or sacred prophecies, and more with the reality of a single person attempting to save up enough to build a temple without funding.

Therefore, create your temple, not in the physical world but in your heart, in all places that you go.

MUNE SHINRI

Holidays and Festivals

All Saints Day/Halloween

Unlike Christianity, Aiken allows ritualized celebration of Halloween. This is the night when the Boundary between Death and Life is weakest, and the souls of the dead can be felt. The wearing of costumes is permitted for young and old, but it is not intended to scare nor conceal one's true self. Aiken disapproves of masks, in favor of costumes. We do not hide our faces, nor deceive, only wear costumes to honor the dead.

These are not evil spirits, simply the souls of the dead. The point of costumes then, is simply to honor the dead, not to change ourselves. This is a fast day in terms of food, though alcohol and a light meal is allowed. Service takes place in the morning, and the evening is left for walking the streets. Unlike in Christianity, this is the same night as Halloween, recognizing saints in the morning, then walking the streets at night.

The point of Halloween is not a night of fear, but to welcome wayward guests.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a day of the harvest, and it is one of great celebration. This day is to show that God has power of nature, rather than lesser nature deities. A feast is held after the service consisting of anything grown during the year. The feast consists of poultry, beans, corn, and squash. The plants used at the altar are corn, beans, and any local crops.

The food should first be displayed at the altar, not to worship but to remind us to be thankful for what God has given us.

Christmas

During Advent, a potted plant is put near the garden for each week with purple string attached (Aiken is like nature, so flame is used mainly for cooking). The third week, a mint plant is added with a pink string. Finally, a dwarf evergreen is added on Christmas Day. On the day of Christmas, there is a small feast of wild game, mixed vegetables, and wild rice. This is a time where despite the coming weather, life is filled with hope. This is a celebration of the birth of Christ, represented by living plants rather than flames.

Easter

This is a celebration of rebirth. The idea of newness is present in this tradition, so people may use this time to set on a new path. The plants used are any plants currently in bloom in the spring. Eggs, fruit, and the like can be eaten. You can eat lamb to remember the death of Jesus on the cross, or any seasonal meat.

Conditional Holidays

As an option, Jewish holidays can be subbed out for Easter and Thanksgiving. When the time surrounding Easter is particularly harsh and oppressive, you may celebrate Passover. Unleavened bread is served with roasted lamb, eggs, and herbs. We do not replace the lamb, because temples are irrelevant to feast days. If Thanksgiving is lonely, you can celebrate Sukkot. The tabernacle does not need to be built, but rather you may sleep outdoors. You may present good, neutral, bad plants to symbolize guests.

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Funeral

Aiken believes in a natural burial. Too much money is to be made from expensive coffins. A shallow trough, covered with sticks and leaves and mud, is probably sufficient. Death is the great equalizer, all that is needed is a small wooden shrine, to hold a person's name and picture. Any funeral celebration may be used, but the priest reserves the right to decide the details of the ritual. Funerals should not be costly.

Wedding

An Aiken wedding is different in a few senses from other religions. First, it does not technically require a priest, just two people making vows with a witness. Second, if the priest does get involved, the focus is on Bonds and Boundaries (both setting up an area for the two to stand, and a hand-fasting, are likely things to happen), that the face of God can be seen in the significant other since Aiken is based on pantheism, and the emphasis on Love and the Elements. Third, it can be tailor-made for the bride and groom.

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Section 3: Lessons

MUNE SHINRI

Founders Aren't Role Models

Most religions like to paint their founder in a good light. The founder is perfect, the founder spoke to God, the founder blah blah blah. I will do nothing of the sort.

I am flawed person, and might always be. This is a list of the hard lessons of my own life, and while some of them may be wrong for some circumstances (and in some cases, I may have learned the wrong lesson entirely), they are designed to share what I have learned. But in the process of writing it, I realized that despite heartache, rejection, loneliness, and so on I wanted to keep living. In some ways, I'm sorry I made that choice, as I lived long enough to hurt people I cared about. But this is intended as instructive material for people believing that there is nothing out there to live for. There are people who care about you, even if you might not know it. The point of life is not someone else's standards of success, it's to live, laugh, love, and care about something.

You must find God, the purpose for your life and your happiness, for yourself. Not your mom, your boss, or anyone else can do it for you. I want to convince others of this, and away from the toxic over-achievement of our culture. For this is precisely what crushes people to the point of suicide, loneliness and rejection by society for failure to measure up. Realizing that you are imperfect is the point.

MUNE SHINRI

Reality is a Mirror

We have this notion that if other people could just accept us, that everything would be fine. But actually, the truth is, what we perceive around us is a reflection exactly of how we treat ourselves. As in, if I feel guilty about something, or uncomfortable, other people are more likely to tease me about it than if I was completely cool about it.

Stop feeling guilty about what you want. If you want to do anything, this is okay, provided you don't hurt others. Because when you hurt others, you are really hurting yourself.

Whenever someone treats you bad, ask yourself, "what am I feeling guilty about?" Treat people with kindness and their issues will fall away. All else is there for you to learn and grow from. That said, do not fall into narcissism. These other people exist too, to keep you company.

MUNE SHINRI

No Holy Books

There is no such thing as a holy book. Neither is there such a thing as a holy person or a holy place. These ideas are a form of idolatry. In actual fact, any book including this one, is simply inspired word. This is dangerous teaching in fact, because it encourages hero-worship and inspires concepts of infallibility, which is dangerous precisely because it inhibits dialogue and questioning of any problems encountered with the faith. By the same token, there is really no such thing as something secular. Even a commercial can teach spiritual truth. The Bible is not God's word, yet it is written by those who were made in God's image and who were inspired by God. Jesus is God's Word. So is all life, as existing in nature. A book? No, a book is only of worth if it is used, even if its use is to be burned. Whether the Bible, Tao te Ching, or even this one. The respect should be given to builders of statues, writer of books, yet the books or statues themselves are just objects. It's how we treat things that matters, not to smash them, and show disrespect for their maker or giver. Nothing is sacred, but you ought to treat property correctly.

Conversion

Aiken is designed to be a personal religion, not to be spread by the sword or the tongue. It may be only spread to close friends or family members, or if the person actually asks about the religion. The decision to become a priest is made by the individual, and nobody is damned for not joining; however, if you feel you must meet, simply gather at the nearest temple and worship there, if there is no official gathering available. If no temple will allow you to quietly gather without fear of the proselyte, meet quietly in a natural setting, or at home. Likewise, the Aiken follower should not be coerced into another religion, or made to feel damned for not joining, but coexist and learned from the religion. Aiken being personal entails that all religious beliefs are decided by the follower, not the organization they belong to. Aiken is devoted to loving self and others, so one must learn to find religion that appeals to them, and which does not harm other people.

Hammer of Cults

The name of this lesson comes from similar writings called the Hammer of Witches. Having been in a cult by accident, the writer feels that this is at least as grave as witchcraft, for it manipulates the feelings of those who attend, trapping them and taking away their personal hopes and dreams. Understand that God wants our devotion, our hearts and bodies, of our own free will. This is why free will was created, so that mankind could choose God themselves. Any organization that forces people to give up their possessions rather than leaving it up to them, that seeks to cut ties with others as a way of controlling them, and which gives nothing back to the community, is not a monastic community but a cult. Cults should be destroyed, undermined, and any members should be deprogrammed from its teachings. Failing this, one who recognizes the workings of a cult should flee, for neither salvation nor any other gain can be attained from such a place, only the loss of one's soul to evil.

There are cults everywhere too, in the workplace, even in the home. The act of forcing your ideas down the throats of other people, without their say, is the height of malice. God wants us to have our dreams, to have families and be able to work, to give ourselves willingly to our lives, and to have our hopes. We give all we have and cut our ties only as willing devotion, not at the suggestions of others. For to give up our dreams, our hopes, and our love at the suggestion of another is tantamount to losing one's soul. God wants workers, not puppets. So it is that we live in world that allows our choices.

MUNE SHINRI

What Can We Be Sure Of?

It seems obvious to modern people that the Earth is round. We learned in science class, all sorts of things about the curvature of the Earth and seeing NASA or National Geographic pictures of satellite imagery. But it is entirely possible that such pictures are doctored. When you look into the horizon, you can see straight ahead with little or no curvature for only about 11 miles at most, but when you look in the sky you can see light years away. This is explained as because of a function of the curve, but it is true even at high altitudes, where you should be able to see over the curve, making this more like a domed barrier or firmament. This is not to say that I'm a Flat Earth type, I'm merely stating that such things are taken as given without question. Such questions should be asked. Such things should be disputed.

To be perfectly honest, we cannot be sure of anything. Human beings could only be male, with all females caught in an elaborate act. A virgin would have no means of knowing this short of having sex, and even this could be something like a latex skinsuit. Likewise, children might all be produced in a vat or in vitro tube. Without being a woman, and carrying a child to term, how can you be sure? We have no way, likewise of knowing whether things exist when we leave the area of our own sight, or whether our reality is in fact a holograph, or whether existence is something maintained by those existing between moments. Ultimately, to be at peace, one must be able to be at peace with the notion that reality is perhaps not what we think.

MUNE SHINRI

The Purpose of Existence

We go through this life vainly wondering what our purpose is. We wait for experts and gurus to set us on our path. But nobody can tell you besides you what your life is meant for.

One method which leads one to unhappiness is trying to please others. You cannot spend your life trying to please others. Reality is a mirror, so anything you do or feel is reflected back to you. Any attempt to please others will simply mirror that you are discontent, and want people to like you. Why don't you like you? Because other people don't like you. Why don't other people like you? Because you don't like you.

Second, making the mistake of viewing this reality mirror as a sign that all of us are figments of the self, and that the idea is to merge into Higher Being. Yes, God is One, and all of us are part of God. But God created us as individuals, to live out our own purpose. We are not God, we are only part of God's Creation. Compare humanity to coral. Each section is part of the whole, but is also distinct. Since we are both part of something greater, and separate beings, we will never be truly alone.

Reach out your heart to other people, when you are sad or down. They will be able to help you.

So, if the Self is not meaning, and Other is not meaning, what is? What is the purpose of existence? I cannot find one for you. My purpose is to teach those fixated on Other about the Self, and fixated on Self about Other, so they can break both dependence and the illusion of isolation, to build a better world.

But what your purpose is, will always be up to you. We must not surrender to nihilism. Find your purpose, and strive to do it.

MUNE SHINRI

Leadership is Teamwork

Many businesses have extremely wrong-headed ideas about what leadership is. They value it as an important skill, or a sign of greatness. It is neither.

A leader must be independent, because primarily to be a leader means listening to the rest of the team. A leader is simply a person who sees what needs to be done, sees nobody doing it, and asks other people to help them. A leader can do the job themselves, but needs others to help them. A leader must be independent, they must be their own person, but also part of a team. Leadership isn't an important skill, because anyone can do it. And it's not a sign of greatness because the very skill of leadership is admitting the job is too big for just you to do.

Many leaders are stressed out about their jobs. This because they try to “run” things. Think about the high school principal, though. All of their energy is spent policing bad kids. When you watch after the behavior of others, when you rule them, karmic backlash dictates others govern you. They make your life busier, more stressful, in your family life, in your marriage, they make you regret trying to oversee them. The best leaders are advisers, like a principal who sees a struggling transgender student in a campus as they are about to retire from stress, decides to give the student fashion advice and emotional support. True leadership is about teamwork and caring for others.

Ambition is Evil

In this life, people have dreams and aspirations. But there are two dangers with these. The first is trying to tear down or stifle the dreams of others. Obviously, such people are despicable. But there are also those who pursue their dreams, even at the cost of pushing aside their friends and loved ones. Being willing to pursue such dreams at all costs however means you have sentenced yourself to loneliness and sorrow.

The truth is, most people pursue ambitions to impress loved ones. But loved ones often won't be impressed if you throw away time with them to try to pursue a big role somewhere. The dreams you need are those you personally care about, and even those require that you respect the rights of others. It is important to respect your self, and have dreams. But before that is a sense of balance, neither giving up your dreams nor interfering with others.

It is good to have goals. Human beings do need to learn and grow, and it is important to have a life which has purpose. But we shouldn't live a life that is based on other people's expectation of our success. Our success or failure should not be a source of sorrow.

MUNE SHINRI

True and False Faith

Religions like Christianity often mention that there will be false prophets or false gods. What exactly do they mean? Well, there's several ways to run afoul of the true God. First, to assert God does not exist, and nothing we do matters. Often times such belief systems seem popular because they advertise themselves as freedom, and paint conventional religion as too rigid. "Those traditional religions don't allow sodomy, transgender lifestyles, bestiality, polygamy, or necrophilia. They are bigoted." These systems originally present themselves as freedom, but watch out! When you pursue your desires without restraint, remember the consequences. You don't understand what I mean? Well, whenever the Jews turned away from God, they always wound up being conquered and enslaved. Remember that so-called free religions also allowed slavery, and be aware. God does allow homosexuality, polygamy, and transgender lifestyles. But, homosexuality and transgender lifestyles often weaken the populace as it does not reproduce or becomes a group of eunuchs. Polygamy creates heredity confusion and makes inbreeding a problem. God says, "You can do all things, but not everything is good for you." The false freedom of the secular eventually leads to chains.

Islam seems to be trendy right now, and "they're modern", according to the secular world. But *are* they modern? In France, a little girl accused her teacher of making caricatures of Muhammad, and he was beheaded. She later admitted she made it up. And what is modern about throwing homosexuals from rooftops? Islam often hides behind the notion that just a few of the followers are violent, so the whole religion should not be judged on that. This is incorrect. The people should not be judged, but the book of Islam (Quran) advocates violence. We don't judge *people*, we judge *ideologies*. And just as state Shintoism wasn't accepted, we shouldn't invite Islam into our countries. Note the distinction, I said not to invite them in, not to go into their own countries and hurt them. I believe in boundaries, largely because mine are horrible.

Aside from Islam and secularism, even religions that are peaceful have problems. Some are cults that pretend to preach peace until they take over. Some have problematic notions of salvation or the afterlife. Still others practice slavery or other forms of oppression. These are the works of false prophets. But I have not yet talked about false gods.

While there are clear false gods, like those who take manmade ideals and make them into a god (becoming so into sports that you neglect friends and family), one of the ways there can be a false god is if our notion of God himself is false. For example, "God loves everyone, and so I don't have to worry about anything." This sort of mentality breeds a licentious attitude. God does love everyone, but if you have a big orgy, expect to come down with some STDs. Will you then blame God for the consequences of your actions? Likewise, there is the opposite ideal about the nature of God, that he is some legal entity that weighs our sins and decides we didn't do this, so into Hell for us.

This accuses God of being like the man who gave five, two, and one talents, expecting his share to be doubled, and taking from the man who earned nothing everything he had. This is not God, this is how the Pharisees saw God. But God says, "I desire *mercy*, not sacrifice."

False teaching confuses, leads to violence, and causes fear. Real teaching gives hope, clarity, and peace of mind. We must remember that nothing can separate us from God's love, and those who teach us otherwise are trying to condemn us. But "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord," so those who condemn others are condemned. If God wanted to condemn us, he certainly could do exactly this, but his desire is that all might be saved. We must trust God, and believe in his mercy and best interests for us.

MUNE SHINRI

The Unseen World

This world is not what we think it is. We live day to day never seeing or noticing what goes on, and seeing only the “work hard and you will be successful” or “sacrifice and you will get to Heaven” models of being. But this isn't really how things are.

Behind the scenes, numerous parties are working to make this world what it is. On the political level, you have numerous private individuals with huge amounts of money or power. There are also organizations, like the CIA, who look after the country they protect and assert propaganda to ensure loyalty to state.

But these above are irrelevant, for their power in this world depends on the cycles of rebirth and the Afterlife, meaning when they die, they are also mortals and have to be reborn. They are human agencies. There are spirits of all types, including angels and demons, who cause misfortune or fortune in this world, and harm/protect humans. In this matter, it should be noted, that much of what you think is “coincidence” in this world is actually a result of either people, or spirits doing behind the scenes actions. But neither should these be taken seriously, for their power comes from our faith in them.

Finally, there are creatures called Reapers, who oversee the larger portions of running existence itself. They take the dead where they need to go, and allow Life and the activity of Nature to happen. The Reapers are the “backstage crew” of reality. Neither should they be feared, for they live in service to God.

MUNE SHINRI

Grand Theory of Death

Death is nothing to fear.

When you die, two things happen. First, the body decays and converts into natural energy. That is, it becomes the building material for other creatures to eat, so that they will in turn become strong, and produce new life.

As for the soul, it has a choice. A person is body, spirit, and soul. The soul is an immortal part, that simply appears like a ball of energy, the spirit is the non-physical leftover of a person. The soul separates the spirit out into a new form and reborn as a new spirit (becoming a ghost, animal, human, god, devil, or part of the Afterlife), it can enter into the Afterlife, or it can be reincarnated and retain its past life. It can also remain as a ghost, until such time it wants to pass on. This choice may be made by the soul, or it may be made by another. The soul is unchanged because it is from God, but the spirit can live and die. If the spirit is destroyed, the memories of past lives are gone.

Death is seen as a parting, and is often dismissed under “realism” as nothing more than the simple end of the mind. But death has no power over the spirit, and people can meet again if they wish it. The spirit has a choice in the matter.

What is Religion?

Whenever you read a holy book, you will hear about divine inspiration, about how the founder of the religion had some sort of encounter with whatever their religion is about. Is this actually true, or did the founders just make these stories up to round up followers?

Well, the simple answer is both. A religion has divine encounters because the founder believes in the encounter. Some founders are indeed running a scam, but it's not up to me to make a call on that. Because reality is somewhat subjective, the founder sees religion based on their perspective, and therefore a divine experience is the epitome of their worldview.

When the found of a religion forms their beliefs and tenants, they come from the person's worldview. A person's worldview is based upon their past, and their heritage. For example, Jesus grew up under the oppression of Roman rule and Jewish bureaucracy, Mohammed had to contend with rival religions and desired fame. This is not to say we cannot have a purpose larger than ourselves, or that reality is completely up to our whims. This world is a place we all live in, so some beliefs are shared, while others are personal. It is how our life connects with the rest of humanity that matters.

MUNE SHINRI

Life Contains Afterlife

This life has subjective elements to it. In each moment, there are parts of Heaven or Hell. You don't need to die in order to experience this. Whenever you have loss, stress, pain or sorrow this is a taste of Hell. Whenever you experience bliss, love, and peace of mind this is a taste of Heaven.

Death is when you release yourself from this world, so rather than overlapping with the world of dreams, you are fully present in this land.

Remember, your actions in this world affect this reality. Everything you do matters. If you hurt people in this life, or allow them to hurt you, your life changes accordingly.

Afterlife

Where do people go when they die? Typically, they go to hell, heaven, or reincarnation. Unlike most religions, the object is not necessarily to reach Heaven, or even be reincarnated. Instead, the object is to Master the Heart, for if this is done, it will stop mattering where you end up. The point instead is to remember, not only yourself, but souls that have come before.

One should try to remember everything truly important, for without knowledge of such things, no afterlife would be of any worth. The Afterlife is not Heaven or Hell, but a blank mass that is built by the wishes of the Heart. Further, those who care about you may be able to intercede on behalf of where your soul goes. This is what we mean by a Savior, everyone you know and love is the the Body of Christ. And Jesus saves.

Viewed from the outside, remembered loved ones appear at night as bright stars to those who can see them. Viewed from the inside, death is like a dream, where anything you believe is real. What is truly important is the time spent with other people. One's fate is decided by the balance of grace and love given to them by God through the sacrifice of Love. By faith and love, one may learn to find peace regardless of one's destination.

MUNE SHINRI

About Reincarnation

Hinduism or Buddhism (I forget which one) hold that the point of reincarnation is that the soul is trying to grow into its ultimate self, and that Earth is a sort of “training ground” toward this aim. This is nonsense. If life is about Bonds and Boundaries, than truly nobody can tell you how to live your life, or when you've “gotten it right”. Life is what you choose to make of it, down to your name and starting environment.

The other disagreement about reincarnation is that the ultimate result is some sort of unity with the cosmos. All of us, to start with are souls. Souls are effectively joined with the cosmos to start with, but losing what made us individuals is appalling and disgusting. When you pass on, you have the option what happens. You could give your soul to dwell in another person or as part of Nature or the universe, head to Afterlife, or become part of a family as a new soul. But all of this is your choice, there is no ultimate destination, just a desire to do something.

Likewise, karma is only limited to people who remember you from a previous incarnation. This is why Boundaries are important, to avoid inadvertently treading over old wounds or repeating mistakes. It is important to remember that while karma exists, the Christian law of grace also exists. In fact, if anything, reincarnation can be said to be a reflection of God's forgiveness.

The ultimate goal of reincarnation is not to unite with God and snuff the self. It is to become at peace with the Self and become a co-Creator with God. Alternatively, one might develop a different goal of existence. God is both Being and Essence, so we too are both individuals and part of a cosmic One. When we each realize we have something to add, a vision of Creation, this is when the world slowly becomes Heaven.

Wake up Sleeping Angel

A lot of so-called Christians think that the way into heaven is to “be a good person” or do “good things.” This is not the way of any Christianity much less Aiken, this is cheap secular morality designed to convince you to fear for your soul so you won't rebel against working at some dead-end job and strive for something greater. While you worry about acting “good” or “polite” in a vain attempt to impress God, your greater job assigned to you to love your neighbor as yourself and to seek to lose your life for Love is being left undone. Seeking to earn your way into heaven through acts of goodness, is actually an attempt to save one's own life, which is the antithesis of Love. Instead, one should accept their life and themselves and so doing strive to help others from a genuine heart, because one has grown to like others. If dreams are a subset of reality, then “reality” in turn is a subset of the true reality that awaits us in the afterlife, and as co-Creators of God's work, we are as angels or demons sleeping. Rather than being “good” strive to be true and forget what others in society demand, then when we awaken from this dream we call “life” we will find ourselves in our pure state of being.

MUNE SHINRI

God is One

The concept of God and Man is grossly distorted. It isn't that God is some outside being that created the universe, and we are obligated to worship him. Nor shall we live in awe of God. The opposite mistake of arrogance must also not be made, though.

Humanity is a part of the Unity of God. All of us have divinity as part of ourselves, and also the freedom to live our lives. However, what makes live meaningful is accepting help and sacrifice from other people, and being the source of help and sacrifice in others. Humans are like a flower that has multiple stalks, each is distinct and part of the whole, each is separate yet functions best when connected to the whole. Because of this, knowledge gained in one's life needs to have real-world testing.

God is Many

Before we make the mistake of narcissistic "All existence is Self" thinking, however, we must consider the following. Can we wish away our problems?

Can we simply say "I am the only one who exists, so all that happens to me is just a projection."

While it is true that this world is ultimately not absolute reality, what is not true is that we are to sit on our hands dreaming of contentment, and do nothing to actually achieve it. Reality is a reflection of the Self. But we must not make the mistake of thinking that "I am the only one in this world." All of us are part of God, and we are not alone. The point is not to become fixated on the idea of union with God. Each of us is already in union with God. Yet God calls us not to be alone, but to think of others, because each of us has something to add to Creation.

God is On Our Side

We have this notion that we are doing the right thing, and those other people are in the wrong. However, this is faulty. There are wrong belief systems and wrong actions, but not wrong people. All people are under the grace of God, and as such, all are those God helps.

Suppose God has a prayer, "Please God, let us be victorious in battle." And the other side prays, "let us not be killed in combat." Whose prayer should God answer? The truth is, in such instances, God will try to spare both sides undue death. God is on everyone's side, including our enemies.

MUNE SHINRI

Accepting Jesus

Christians may tell you that you need to accept Jesus in order to be saved. This may be true, or it may not be, for this life is given by God to do as you will. Regardless, it misses the point of who, and what Jesus is.

Assume for a second, that you have a girlfriend. She is not a neurotic mess, but has her head on straight. As healthy as she is, she likes something about you, and is willing to fight to make you whole as well. If you know a person/people who will fight on your behalf, who love and accept you no matter what, forget someone who died long ago. You have already met Jesus, and need only to accept this love. Be that person for someone else.

Misunderstanding Jesus

Aiken is a belief system that is basically comparative religion. It is a true American religion, for it blends ideas from many faiths. This is not to say it is some kind of charismatic movement that expects to be all things to all people. First and foremost is understanding that religion is really about you, not about other people's moral standards.

That said, the basic belief set is ideas from Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Taoism. From a purpose of comparative religion, I have had the opportunity to look at several religions and political groups, and then come up with my own ideas on this. Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. Galatians 1:8 to be contrary to this is to be a false teaching. Judaism, Buddhism, and Taoism, do not make the character of Jesus into something false, unlike some others. He is probably not the Messiah to Jews because he failed to meet their expectations, he is a bodhisattva candidate in Buddhism and an avatar in Hinduism, although not necessarily in line with their values. If Taoism does not reject the figures of other religions, so Jesus is not declared false or anything, just not necessarily relevant to them. None of these distort the actual nature of Jesus, a loving and virtuous man, who is called Son of God and died for our sins.

What does? The idea of painting Jesus. You've seen those old pictures where Jesus looks vaguely European despite being born in the Middle East. Same thing. The idea of painting Jesus as a socialist. Or a capitalist. Or pro-life. Or anything really. Jesus is, ultimately, God who was born as a human child and died as a human man, creating a bridge between ourselves and God. It isn't just the forgiveness of sins, but also the breakdown of barriers between ourselves and God. This bridge still exists, and will always do so, despite our failings.

What does this look like? It means that rather than some distant man on high promising to come again sometime, Jesus is already here. The girl at work who sticks her neck out for you. The old black man needing money. Your dearest love. Your parents. Whoever you meet, Jesus is within them. One day, you may meet Jesus in the flesh, and he'll be nothing like you imagined.

When I wrote ideas of Christianity here, the point was not for this to become a Christian religion, nor reject or corrupt Christianity. Rather, I reject apocalypses, hierarchies, predestination and election, and final damnation. These things are constructs to rule others in fear. They are not in line with Christ who died on the cross to free us from sin. Similarly, these ideas should be rejection whether you are a Christian, a Muslim, or a Buddhist. You shouldn't accept other people as better than you (hierarchy), nor that you are better than others (election), nor wait in fear of final punishment or worry for sins (damnation/apocalypse). Jesus is already here, has already died for your sins, and you already live in his kingdom. I see no reason why it matters if you want to also believe other things.

MUNE SHINRI

Quit Posing

In this life, there will be people who tell you that you need to be a certain way to be accepted, or do certain things. However, this is the opposite of actual belonging. Trying to change yourself to suit other people runs into two problems, first, you lose all sense of yourself and your happiness, and actually distance yourself from loved ones, and second you can never please everyone.

This is not to say that you can be complacent. It is important to set goals and work toward them, but generally much of the neurosis in the world stems from not being able to draw the line about what genuinely needs changing, and what is an endearing quality.

What makes you vulnerable, is also what makes you connect with other people.

Learning to Trust

Trust is a difficult thing in this world. Friends, and even family, will often let you down.

And when a worthy person does come along, you ask “What's the catch? What do you need from me?”

Learning to trust is not the same as being gullible. You do not need to suspend all disbelief, or give up the ability to analyze situations logically.

Trust is closer to being able to open up emotionally to another person, to share feelings that are kept locked away from people you haven't met. It is this lesson that must be learned if one is to connect with other people. Of course, if you don't wanna trust other people, don't trust other people. It might make you alone, however.

MUNE SHINRI

Rules of Dating

Other people like to set rules for dating like “Girls only like guys that are clean-shaven” or “don't date someone out of your league.” The only hard and fast rule is that simply being “nice” isn't okay. There are plenty of people who act “nice”, that is, until being rejected when they show their true colors. Being nice is common decency, you should also have something to offer, and take decent care of yourself. Never demand something of her that you wouldn't of yourself (such as great hygiene when yours is horrible).

There are women who like clean-shaven men, who like rugged men, who like bold men, who like shy men, who like masculine men, who like feminine men, there are women who like women, and there are men who like men. There is a common myth that there is one ideal, but this is a lie. What those like about you initially, unless they ask you to change it, is probably why they like you, and changing that to fit a common ideal of love is a mistake. I can't prove this though, because I've never excelled at dating.

Love is not enough. There are other things necessary in a relationship. Devotion, compatibility, acceptance and understanding of how their personal culture differs from yours. Poor compatibility does not mean a relationship is sunk by default. It does however mean they have issues to get past. The only true rule of dating is that it's hard work.

You may have parents who stand in the way, a full-time job eating your time, and other such problems. You do not go in with the notion “love conquers all” and quit job, family, etc that opposes you. You have to listen, make difficult decisions, and try to make things work. And, it takes two.

Betrothed to God

As a condition of our birth, we are all the Bride of Christ. The Church shares one body, meaning all people are in a love relationship with God. When we die, we are to be married, and to spend our lives along with God. The world we live in is one of waiting. Human relationships are generally screwed up because they are based on a flawed system. And yet, it is important to remember that everyone we meet is our lover, even those who seem to be our enemies.

This is important to remember as part of Shintoism and Buddhism is that everything, even rocks, trees, and the air we breathe is part of God. Likewise, we are God's.

MUNE SHINRI

No Coincidences

The average person sees random events forming into a pattern and dismisses it as “coincidence.” But I tell you, there is no such thing.

Everything, the movie or book you pick up to view, your choices in jobs, even what you eat is symbolic. Doing these things teaches you about various things, including about yourself and the world around you.

This is not to say there are no choices. But everything you experience, is in some way part of a larger plan to guide your growth as a human being.

Why Destiny is Crap

Just as there are no coincidences, there is no such thing as fate. When we talk of fate or destiny, what we actually mean are two main things.

First, we mean one's purpose. For instance, human destiny is to be born, reproduce, and ultimately die. This is how humans are, but it is not the same as fate. Some people aren't born, dying in the process of childbirth, some never meet anyone and do not reproduce, and at least one person was supposed to have not died. Purpose is not the same thing as fate. And even death is not one's fate. Second, destiny refers to the sum total of choices a person makes. Consider what was said in the section about there being no coincidences, about all experiences being part of a larger plan. That plan doesn't exist if you don't move towards it. That is, no matter how passionately I may want to be a basketball player, if I don't practice dribbling and shooting these “coincidences” won't start happening. You simply won't move towards the path of being one. For an example, if I use scissors and put them in a drawer on my desk, have wrapping paper from Christmas, buy some books and meet someone who likes the subject of books I bought, and I want to give her a present, this is all destiny. But it is not a random event, but rather the result of all those other actions.

MUNE SHINRI

Be Your Best, Not The Best

The world is far too ambition driven. While you try to please others, to move towards “success,” you have to compete with everyone else, put yourself in competition with other people, and push everyone equal or below you out of the way in your desire to be the best, to be promoted to the top. But this religion isn't about success. It's not about the 700 Club, that God has supposedly blessed with financial success. It's not about failure either. There are tips in this book about herbal medicine and natural living, but you are by no means condemned to the forest to live on the fringes. Some people may like owning a business, some may not. Some may like being an artist, some may not. Or a writer, or whatever. The point is, in the rush to success, we have advertised one business or another over others, so people desperate for jobs trample each other to be “the best.” But there is always someone better. The important thing is to be your best, to do the work in life that you want to do, even if you're the only one doing it. To be happy with what you do, and with yourself. From there, to be your best, you need to be a good friend to those who care for you. I know this. Because trying to be “the best” to please others ruined my life. I am a broken man because of it, at the time of this writing. I don't want to same to happen to you. So don't confuse this with fundamentalist Christianity, or modern day work perfectionism. Compete with nobody, and simply find what you wanna do, and do it.

Twin Swords

The world insists upon two things in order for a person to thrive. The first is Dedication. Without effort to everyday tasks, people do not grow and improve. However, a belief set that too heavily bases itself on this leads people to feel that they are worthless. That they haven't worked hard enough, or aren't enough.

The second is Acceptance. Without feeling worthy of the job given, you will work and work yet never really belong. Those without being able to love themselves will not easily be loved by others. However, this can be taken to the point where one becomes complacent and allows issues to pile up. Reality is the wall all about us, closing in. We have two swords to protect us from what life can do to us. These swords are best used in unison.

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Happiness with Unhappiness

Apparently, in modern society, it's a crime to be unhappy. Surrounded by books, video games, fancy cars, computers, expensive jewelry, and various convenient devices, if one has everything, and is still unhappy, there must be something wrong. In fact, on a large scale, people are unhappy because such things just create a greater need for work, and less actual security. Even relationships today are based more on material worth than actual love. And yet, forsaking all possessions won't make you happy either, for as you wonder when your next meal is coming from you have no peace of mind. Neither is dependence a particularly romantic trait. We seek and seek happiness, but perhaps this is the problem. Whether we have nothing or everything, if we still want more, this means we aren't truly happy.

When nothing is going for you, jobs won't hire, love won't approach, and things don't seem to be getting better, what keeps you going? It is when you are happy with being unhappy. Realize that God is there for you, even though times are tough, and be able to endure any hardship.

Thankful During Suffering

It is tempting during adversity to think of your life as a tragedy or a failure. But it is important to remember that one exists, and to be thankful for one's life. Everything else may as well be an illusion. Aiken fully believes in the idea of a holographic universe, and also believes one's feelings have a way of influencing perspective. That is, sometimes you may endure hardships. But the key is to remember to take it in stride and remember there are positives to anything. Doing this will be harder than it sounds, though.

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Bonds and Boundaries

All human relationships consist of Bonds and Boundaries. Love, Nature, and Family/Friends are all Bonds, things in the outside world we can connect to and which give Meaning to life. But just as having Bonds makes life worth living, Boundaries are what is needed to keep from being used, and to keep from being a jerk to others. Boundaries is a sense of knowing the line between your own and another's rights, and how to keep from either getting trampled upon. For instance, doing a job, and not knowing what you do not have to do, is a lack of Boundaries. The reason it is largely free, is because understanding Boundaries is what allows one to live their lives in freedom.

Boundaries of Faith

Aiken is not about imposing rules on human behavior, so these are Boundaries. Boundaries being necessary to keep freedoms one has, these are set in place as customs to live by, not rules to stifle.

Bring anything with you, but use nothing from others. This is to prevent the temple from relying on the government, or being assimilated. Any power, should be created by the temple (solar, wind, whatever), as should any food, water, or clothes.

Oppress no others. Religions emphasizing freedom have a tendency of drawing up people who want a rival religion to oppose it, for the purpose of authority over others. The reason this religion was founded was in response to controlling people.

Do no harm to others. Do not kill, except to hunt. Do not rape, under any cause. Do not steal, unless you need to eat, and try to return what you steal.

Do not begrudge the choices of others. There are some who will live in the temple for two days a week, some who desire to live there for most of the week, and some who visit and never return. The choices of beliefs and faiths is equally important as attendance, Aiken has no set view on what others believe, so long as they want to be there. Self-belief and self-will, in aid to loved ones, is Aiken belief.

Distinguish yourself from others. Conformity is the law of the outside world, but it does not need to your law. Those who believe should find some way to make themselves distinct from such. The human is given free will, not to be obligated to others, but in order that one can help others they care about. Wear a necklace if you wish to remind yourself (see Customs) of such, but it's not necessary.

Aiken can be part of other religions, but other religions aren't part of Aiken

The idea here is that Aiken shouldn't be able to be corrupted. If you have ideas from Aiken, but you're a follower of Buddhism, you're a Buddhist with Aiken ideas. But trying to say you're Aiken with Buddhist ideas is like trying to redefine Aiken according to Buddhism. Though I suppose I've done this some with Christianity, I feel Aiken shouldn't be a conversionary thing but more of counterculture to the idea of orthodoxy. As such, there is no "true" Aiken, for Aiken is about religious homebrewing.

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Heart Sense

The Heart Sense is the ultimate technique of the Aiken religion. Using the idea that God is the embodiment of love, and that all people have spirits from Her, the technique uses the love of others to sense people.

The heart sense under basic training might identify a person by their impression.

Advanced training would allow one to sense the general location of another person, but this of course is rather limited, as it is said that this only works if the two also care vaguely for each other. Master training allows one to read emotions, though this is dangerous as it is subject to one's own interpretation of others.

Aiken

The Aiken is a form of mystic arts utilizing the mudras (hand motions mentioned under Gogyou) in specific patterns. Although it can be used for self defense, the real point is closer to tai chi. The Fire style moves in a circular pattern, the Water style moves in a wavelike pattern, the Earth style thrusts in a cross-like pattern, the Wood style moves in a triangular pattern, and Wind style moves generally in any pattern in a random flowing weave. The feet are not used offensively, but instead, they make quick lunges to dodge attacks. The style also practices fast mixing of several techniques to throw a rival off guard. This style is not particularly offensive, but emphasizes parrying and countering. The aim is not to learn to defend oneself, but to be used in defense of others.

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Faith or Works?

Did the faith of Aiken come from the Catholic faith or Protestantism? Believe it or not, it came from neither. It was formed by melding some of the Taoist faith with Episcopalian Christianity. Anyway, the belief system concerning which saves one is that both, or rather neither alone will save one. We are not saved by faith or works but by love, though love with faith or works is acceptable. One might dedicate one's life to the temple. Or one might spend one's life caring for family and other people. One might even spend one's life only caring about finding romantic love.

One may not sell indulgences, for no matter how holy one is, good faith or good works may not be given. This is because when they are done, good or bad emotions are grafted upon the soul, and the soul may not be given away.

Just as faith and works may commit the soul to afterlife through Love, these may also unbind the chains of a possession. Knowing this, one need never have any fear of what lies beyond death.

Preoccupation with death keeps one from living as one wants, and from living in service to others if one so desires. In the end, fear of afterlife makes one a slave. It is only by living in love and being willing to die for it, that one is set free.

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Final Lesson

Home is where the heart is. Whenever someone tries to tell you that they are family, whether they birthed you or raised you, if they do not love you, if they abuse, mistreat, or manipulate you, and call this “love,” they are not your family.

Likewise, anyone who accepts you, raises you properly, and indeed loves you without anything to gain is your family, regardless of blood ties.

This is the meaning of the statement that a man must leave their family to follow God. Only by indeed finding out what a family truly is like can one know God, and this cannot be found by staying with one’s birth parents. This does not mean one must hate one’s family, but like the temple encourages weekly outings, and accepts the person who wants to leave to explore options, the family that loves must be able to let go, or risk being controlling. Charity begins at home, but it doesn’t have to end there. Love your family, but love the family of those you meet as well.

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Part 2: Utopia

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Politeness

Too much of this culture is an emphasis on saving face. Being made to say “thank you” or “sorry” when you don't mean it, is a good example.

You should in fact say sorry, when you are sorry. And thank people when you are thankful.

But there are too many people who try to buy your devotion with unwanted gifts, and when they don't hear “thanks” for their manipulative actions, get angry. These people are not good people, and you should ignore them. Honesty trumps politeness.

“Equal Rights”

The Great Lie of our era is that things like “equal rights” have to be handed out. All people, black, white, gay, straight, etc, are born with the same rights. Free will, the right to choose one's mate, and so on. If we are human, we by default should be able to do such things without asking or making mandates over other people. It is only those who feel the need to stifle the rights of others that this world is in its sorry state.

What is actually being said, then, is that other people want special privileges, so as to make things “equal.” Granting the right of gays to marry is something that is a given without specific prohibition. Even though a family logically is set up for mating, the actual purpose of a union is that two people are joined.

If we really wanted equal rights, all that would be sufficient to do would be to abolish any laws that say otherwise, not write new ones. Government cannot give us rights.

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Self-Destruction

Humankind is caught in a dangerous trap of self-destruction. This is what is behind problems such as poverty, war, inflation, and even suicide. The problem lies in human desires directed against other humans, for instance, competing to make money so other people will be jobless. These selfish drives rather than making life easier actually make life harder, because the more people “succeed” in this world, the more others have to lose.

Look at cities or countries which tried to pander to human greed by raising income. Each of these places actually became that much harder to life because with the rise in income, comes the rise in living costs.

The Solution

The cause of all problems in human relationships is poor boundaries. The reason Aiken is a religion of Bonds and Boundaries is because in order to have true abiding love, you must have healthy boundaries. You would not invite thugs into your house, just as you don't want a relationship where a partner is all take and no give. On the other hand, healthy boundaries do not mean rigid boundaries. If you shut all others out of your life, you succeed only in becoming angry and alone. Ideally instead, people must be able to assert themselves, but in such a way that rather than push people away, they grow closer. This is key to repairing the world.

The world is a microcosm. What you accomplish in a small town can directly improve or decrease everywhere outside. Be a person who is close to others without feeling used.

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Who is John Galt?

One of the problems of organized religion is people conflating being religious with being unselfish. Whenever societies tried models of government approaching unselfishness, they were always disastrous and always oppressive. You may ask why this is the case, so allow me to explain. While charity is fine, it's a choice. You, the person with means decide to set aside some of your earned money to something you believe in. Some donate to disaster relief, others to medical funds. On the other hand, telling any person that they "need" to give away their money to the less fortunate is typically fighting words. First, the word "fortunate" implies that it was purely luck of the draw. And sometimes that is the case, a person gets fired from their career and can't seem to find work elsewhere. But a person can keep trying and make their own luck, and more importantly, there are those who genuinely made poor decisions, so rewarding their crappy actions is not likely to happen. So, ultimately, socialism must be enforced at gunpoint by big government or by roving gangs of thugs. This is typically why despite the very altruistic sound of this, typically ends up with a massive bloodbath, people refusing to have their bank accounts emptied for random strangers, people refusing to open their homes to worthless deadbeats to take, and so on. Jesus said love your enemies, and forgive those who hate you. Jesus also said to love your neighbor as yourself. If you love yourself, if you truly respect yourself, you do not allow other people to abuse you. You set limits. After those limits are set, however, those with faith are willing to give back to others. The difference, though, is that it's your choice. One day, maybe all of us will want to give to charities, and the world will be a place where none of us have to suffer. But telling people that they must cooperate with mandatory sharing is unethical, and will only worsen the way the world is. Ideally, those your heart goes out to, you choose to give to. You can make a choice to help others, but it should always be your choice, and limited by your means. While it is important to remember that government is ordained by God, neither good nor evil on its own, it is like the workers of the field in one of Jesus's parables. The Master gives the field to them to run, but expects to collect the harvest. When he finds that those who he has given the task run the vineyard poorly, he will do likewise to them. Government should strive to produce good crops, so as to not have to answer to the Master.

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In Spirit & In Truth

There are all manner of temples, sacred mountains, and so on. It is true that ley lines form around such places, but in actual fact, worship is up to you, not just the time and place but even if you want to do it.

If you feel stifled by churches and holy buildings, don't go. Find something else meaningful to you, and go to it. This might be your family, or time with a loved one, or any number of things. This is what is meant by worshiping in "spirit and in truth."

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Governing Least

Perhaps one day, people will be tired of oppressors, and ask only for government that governs them least. Or perhaps one day, governments will learn the lesson of history, that governments have always fallen which failed to respect certain things. A government fails that tries to destroy family. Family is a key system of maintaining stability, it helps people decide to work hard and remain good citizens. The socialist systems like to undermine families with various schemes, and this works in the short term, providing citizens easily programmed by television and the public “education” system, but in the long term, such citizens are autistic, psychotic, and easy to disappoint and will kill people for criticizing them. No system wants this in the long term. It is also foolish to take the people's women or their children. For as people are brainwashed, each generation must become dimmer than the one before.

Second, a government should not take what people need to live on. They should only tax what is sustainable, and should never tax businesses. While I would prefer a government run with no income taxes at all, but a tithe is okay so long as it is taken from salary and does not require people to save their earnings. High taxes ironically mean they eventually go bankrupt, for as the people become poor, and businesses no longer have enough to exist, sooner or later government runs out of people's money. Lastly, life and property of the citizens must be preserved, as if people are taxed or robbed of their property, they may revolt.

The best government of all is no government at all, where people are tired of governing others. But human nature is flawed, and this will not last before violent thugs take over. And so, the best realistic government is a town hall, where people volunteer to lead, and are not given any wages for doing so. Such people do not collect from the citizens, they act as one of them. Taxes affect them, and they do not give them lightly.

The second best government is a small town with a mayor, where there are few taxes except for fees for the services. Government is small and localized, and each town is run differently. If you don't like it, move to another town.

The third best government is one like ancient China based on merit, when the people are qualified. Better still, if such governments rule from afar and have no impact on daily life. Such governments fail to understand others, but also fail to worry them.

The worst governments micromanage, having a global government run even the smallest citizen. Such governments may appear to work for a time, but sooner or later, they go too far or simply run short of resources.

The very worst government tries to convince people that they are free, who uses lies and tricks to make people think they are happy, so they cannot even think to revolt. Such governments take people away if they even ask a question. Their days are numbered.

MUNE SHINRI

Part 3: The Sage

MUNE SHINRI

Definition of a Sage

A Sage is a person who has knowledge and some mastery, not simply of the Yin and Yang from the Tao, but also has the added layer of the Tomoe. The Tomoe is the symbol on the page before. It represents the harmonization is the inner nature of Yin and Yang, with the outside world. It would be a God-dependent man learning to help themselves, or a self-sufficient man learning to trust God and other humans.

More importantly though, a Sage is a human who has wisdom and love, not simply for those within their own social group, but for all of humanity and the strength of will to attempt to lead it, not into ruin as more tyrants do, but to save it from itself. Sages often live lonely lives, and seldom marry, for the world needs them more. Still, a Sage values love, so if the world improves, like Confucius's hunt for a better state brought him an office position at his success, so too may a better world bring a Sage a place to be loved.

Rejecting the Future

The Sage is content with the present. They know the past, they know themselves, but they don't worry about prophecies of doom and gloom. To begin with, there are no prophecies worth knowing beyond the prophecy of the coming of Jesus. And there are no reliable prophecies since then. I do not trust Revelation, nor the prophecies of Nostradamus, nor climate change hype (which btw has been wrong for over fifty years), nor even predictions I make on my own life. In order to become a Sage, I believe one must let go of worry for the future, and let events flow into place as a result of one's actions. This does not mean taking no responsibilities though, but rather letting go of a sense of fatalism. This world has good and evil, but trust in God and the natural world. If there is something that is happening in the present that you do not like, prevent it now.

Sage vs the Bureaucrat

The bureaucrat is a person who attempts to help others while sitting behind a desk, oblivious to the actual problem, or worse they are a person who "helps" by meddling in things which do not even concern them. Even if a person does ask for help their brand of help is actually more like interference, asking the person to do this and that, to fill out this form, all to ultimately rule that perhaps that person does not deserve their help. Too many jobs have this point of view, too many other mediums have this stance, and the world becomes filled with outcasts, rejected time after time. The Sage on the other hand does not behave like the bureaucrat, or if the Sage does, he or she is no Sage. The proper Sage is as if one of the other people waiting in such a place who does as a good, yet normal person would do to help, perhaps moving out of line to facilitate things, or in the case of hiring giving another a chance at job instead of the bureaucrat. The Sage above all is the epitome not of the superhuman, but of what it should truly mean to be human, the law of acceptance.

Previous Sages

Strictly speaking, anyone who has attempted or succeeded in the past to put humanity's best interests first, instead of cowing to bribes or threats has been a Sage.

Nonetheless, various people, if any of the rumors of spiritual powers concerning them were true, were Sages in the other sense of the word. Such people as Jesus, Buddha, and Elijah had transcendent powers such as walking on water, which cannot normally be done through simple faith. Only by allowing outside forces like God or Nature act upon one, in addition to balance of one's own actions, can such miracles be done.

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Helping from Home

The section before talked about a bureaucrat helping from behind a desk. Unfortunately, many such bureaucrats, far from contentedly running welfare and social security and many other big government programs, have decided to foist crackpot systems of illegal immigration on the public. Why is it okay to be charitable from home, but not welcome them to your country? And how is this different from running things at a distance from behind a desk? Because it's not really about the distance, so much as the distant attitude. Once the bureaucrat invites said people in, it's someone else's problem. They don't have to deal with fallout.

Imagine telling people that we have to get drunks and prostitutes off the street, so everyone must invite drunks and prostitutes into their home. Wouldn't be simpler just to go give such people money?

A bureaucrat tells themselves they are doing good, all the while supporting more government oversight, more rules and regulations, and more widespread poverty as a result of trying to import third-world people into the first world. And what has it gotten anybody? Rather than solving their problems, it has burdened our country with third-world problems. The poor immigrants are still poor immigrants and they understand even less about holding jobs here than in their native country, plus now they collect our welfare while our own people struggle under higher taxes. You want to fix the world? Don't do it by committee. Don't use government funding.

Donate to charities. Or better yet, if you're feeling committed, you can personally go over to help. What isn't cool is insisting other people watch after visitors they may or may not want, who may or may not contribute anything to the society. If you want to help give (money, help, food, Heifer donations), don't take (immigrants, people's choices, and people's rights).

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The Tomoe

Learning to access the Tomoe rather than simple Tao requires more than simple emotional strength, or discipline. It requires that one be receptive to the callings of nature, and have trust. The easiest way to train this is perhaps to learn surfing or body-boarding, to feel the flow of the waves, the soil behind the feet, and the air above. The body must be calm and patient for whatever comes, and do nothing until the appropriate action presents itself. Through this method one can unlock the powers of the Tomoe, and be a Sage, even if requires practice to use for longer than a few seconds. Likewise, faith in God or mankind is the same. It requires sensitivity in fellow humans, patience, and a knowledge of when to act. This is how to become a better person, to serve yourself and also serve others.

The Chain of Harm

A Sage should seek to understand the nature of evil in this world, if one is to improve things rather than making them worse. When humans are stressed due to the cares and worries of life, they abuse others. Now there are arbitrary laws, such as karma or other such things, but these blame the person for their failings and do not address the real problem. If a person is abused, to relieve themselves of stress, they abuse others. Who in turn abuse others, who in turn abuse others, who in turn abuse others. If a cat chased by dogs were to eat all the rats in existence, the world would get overrun by insects, and filth would destroy everyone. A Sage breaks this cycle, by refusing to abuse others. Only by treating others well, can this world stop its spiral toward destruction.

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The Sage State

Like a trance, being a Sage is usually a transient thing, because it is an altered state of being. The Sage State is similar to dividing a pie into two equal pieces, before deciding how to slice the third. Your self is in balance (Yin/Yang) and then is further divided between self and other.

No human is completely self-sufficient, and “no man is an island,” so even though the Tao often exists independently of the Tomoe, there is typically a small segment which is devoted to others.

This can be as small as a fraction of the Tao, to up to half the “pie”, as much as the combined total of Yin and Yang. More than that, the human body cannot actually stand and is thus unable to use.

Likewise, too little of this third renders the Tomoe (and the Sage State) unable to form. Too much or even the needed amount, has a side effect of arrogance, a belief that the heavens are aligned with one's fate, and the occasional instance of delusions or hallucinations. In order to combat this tendency it must be remembered that a delusion is a delusion because it centers around the self, and the Sage, despite possibly heightened physical or spiritual gifts, is still human. That said, the actual meaning of the Sage State is a sort of Bond. The Sage State works best when one is in love, and that Love pervades not simply as a normal love does, but as a way of helping the entire world.

MUNE SHINRI

The Sage and the Reaper

Unlike the bureaucrat, which is definitely at odds with which the Sage stands for, the Reaper and the Sage are really two sides of the same coin. The Sage is a paragon of Life, having an abundance of natural energy flowing through them. The Reaper is a paragon of Death, being able to exist not as a simple soul, sent to some afterlife somewhere, but a being with purpose. The Reaper cares for the world of the living by causing things to grow, guiding weather, aiding childbirth, and claiming the dead when their time comes.

It is a mistake to think that a Reaper is killing those it claims. As one lives in the Earth, the soul can last, but the body it is attached to begins to degrade, it is like a reaper of crops separating wheat from chaff, that a Reaper takes the soul from the body, so it can claim a new body, or head to worlds beyond.

The Sage and the Reaper both have tools of the Heart in which they can perform tasks. These tools are not seen by the eye, but are rather expressions of purpose. As Reapers have tasks for anything concerning the natural world, there are tools for these tasks as well.

The Sage is in the world helping it as a fellow actor, a Reaper is like the behind-the-scenes crew for existence.

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Part 4: Prayers

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What Is Prayer?

If the Mune Shinri truly accepts all forms of worship (including atheism), what can be said about prayers? Simply that prayer is a type of energy that flows throughout the world, and inside the self. This is vague, but look at it this way. In forests, you expect it to rain, or the plants die. The plants effectively release energy to “pray” for rain. Human beings, as well, can use energy outside themselves or energy from within to pray for things.

Prayer can consist of words, physical motions, or desires. The prayers below are written as verbal, but they express the intent behind what you wish. You could just as easily have a prayer granted that was simply a powerful desire. Finally, prayers are not inherently good. The origin of a prayer is the Unity of existence, meaning the sum of all living things and hoping and wishing for something. Unity of All Things, is the fundamental definition of what God is.

MUNE SHINRI

Section 1: Simple Prayers

MUNE SHINRI

Protect Self

I have so much left to live for, Lord. As my life is still ahead of my, protect my life, protect my health, and protect my happiness. Finally, when my soul shifts to its proper place, let my life have been fulfilled, so let me truthfully say that this was the fate I deserved.

Protect Others

This person is dear to me, God. Let _____ live their life out with glory, love, and joy. Let this person find happiness. Finally, if it is your will, let us be together when death comes to claim us. Send this person not in to anguish, but let my love protect them.

Marriage

(No priest is needed. Humans have the natural ability to join in matrimony.)

I, (Name), being a woman/man, in the eyes of God pledge to love, cherish, and protect my beloved, from any harm that life gives to us.

And I, (Name), being a man/woman, in the eyes of God pledge to raise our children and cherish my beloved, for all of our days.

As God has given us hearts to love, and offer love in return, let it so be that we are married.

Prayer after Death

Merciful God, this person has passed to the other world. Strengthen the love in their heart, and let them feel worthy of Heaven.

(Likewise, there is an official burial ceremony)

Protect from Evil

Defend us, Merciful God, from ghouls and ghosts, from demons and evil influence, from dark prayers and religions based upon harming others. Let not our minds, our hearts, or our will be controlled. Let any sort of evil of physical or spiritual nature be repelled from us, let us be protected from our own failings of sin, and let us find our afterlife freed from the chains of guilt.

Protect from Physical Harm

Twelve sages linked their will to build this, the builder shed some spirit into the vessel, and it was made whole. Let this now remain intact for the duration of natural existence, nor let this crack, break, or fall into harm. Likewise, protect your people, God, and let not their essences escape the vessel prematurely.

Endure Elements

Cold wind, pouring rain, frozen snow, and scorching heat. By the guidance of the Heart, let none of this bother us. Let our heart glow with a flame that is neither hot nor cold, yet keeps us alive and warm in winter or cold in winter. Let this divine flame glow within us be unlike any mortal flame, let this become a symbol of our abiding love for you, and as our hearts burn brighter and brighter, we shall have ever less to fear from sleet and snow, from wind and rain, from heat and humidity.

MUNE SHINRI

Atonement

As guilt weighs upon the soul, it slowly destroy the body. It slowly destroys the feeling of a worthy existence and a decent life, until the person feels doomed. I intercede on behalf of this person, I have seen some good along with these failings. I ask, lead this person back into a joyous and worthy life, and forgive this person even when they cannot forgive themselves. Make them whole again, in Love's name.

Prayer for Mercy

I have done terrible things for which I am ashamed. There is nobody to intercede on my account, or to speak of good works which I have performed. I cannot even forgive myself. I ask of you, not knowing whether you will hear my pleas, yet Merciful God please come to my aid.

Prayer to Nullify Curses

As I wander throughout the land, I may perhaps scrape my knee on rocks or branches; however, under your protection Merciful God, let no name or insult ever hurt me in heart, mind, body, or spirit. Let not any evil prayer cling to my essence.

Prayer for Strength

The journey before me requires great strength of body and character, Lord of All. I will be tested as never before, and called upon to perform great feats for you. Give me this strength, so that I may succeed in my quest.

Prayer for Speed

By my Heart, let me run the race of faith. Give me feet as swift as the currents of air and water, let me outrun the beasts of the field. Let me work in faith and swift speed to spread the good news through cities and countries which I pass on my long journey.

Prayer of Knowledge

Lord God, Solomon asked you for eyes to see through illusion and deception, for wisdom to understand truth and banish lies. Let this gift not die with him, yet spread to the peoples of the earth. I have been caught in a bind, Lord, help me find the wisdom to determine the truth, and find the proper course of action.

Public Speaking

As Moses was slow of speech, Lord God, so am I. Give me the proper words to lead, to motivate, and to aid. Let me speak and be heard, and let those who are resistant, if they do not accept my message, at least accept it as equally valid to their own.

MUNE SHINRI

Prayer to Bring Rain

The fields are dry, Merciful God. Please allow them to be soaked with your great love, and let them bloom in due harvest. Cry on their behalf, and they shall become moist indeed.

Prayer of Snow

As our hearts have become cold with loneliness Eternal God, let this day be said aside to spend time with friends and family. Let us play in the snow, and not worry about mundane chores. Let it snow, Lord.

Prayer of Fire

The fires of passion burn brightly Eternal God, let the fervor of home and hearth rage in us, consuming sorrow and disaffection. Let this passion burn in us, and let us bind with others in beautiful harmony.

Prayer of Air

The winds of courage glow within us Eternal God, freeing us from our busy lives into Chaos. Let this essence mold around us, let the breath of air fill our lungs and our hearts, and let us breath a new life. Let the air come to our aid, Lord.

Prayer of Healing

Merciful God, this person is need of healing. Their arm is broken, their leg hurts, or they have a problem with their insides. Return their tissues to normal, and speed your healing, so that when your new dawn comes, they may be greatly improved in health.

Prayer of Emotional Healing

Merciful God, this person is need of healing. Their heart is broken, their spirit is shattered, and they no longer have the will to go on. Let them find that there are those who believe in their worth as a person, even if they have currently have hard times. Let them learn to feel good about themselves again.

Prayer to Relieve Tragedy

Merciful God, we have come out of the cataclysm with our lives and we thank you for it. We ask you, if it is your will, let this unfortunate turn of events give us strength of character, and let our life be eventually restored to its former glory.

MUNE SHINRI

Prayer of Hope

The box beckons claiming to be Hope. Yet when it opens all evils are unleashed upon the world, and instead is Despair. What is the power of this Box of Pandora? The ability to know the future, for with this skill we are powerless to change it. The Hope which lies still inside the box is the power to seal our anticipation of the future from actual fact. That is, our greatest Hope lies in the fact that life is chaotic and uncertain. Eternal God, let there be hope in our life.

Prayer of Chaos

Eternal God, you know the danger of too much planning in our lives. We live out each day the same as the last, never looking forward to anything. Free up our day to seeming disaster, so that we can take a new look at our lives and discover what is truly important to us. May Chaos find a plan for all of us.

MUNE SHINRI

Prayer for Children

Let the children come to you. Let those just born, those who are starting to walk on their feet, and those who are almost teenagers seek you and be answered in their prayers. Let them find faith in you.

Prayer for Animals

The animal hungers for its master, Eternal God. Let it find a life filled with happiness, and simple concerns. Let it be understood be humans in its needs, and let every desire of its heart be filled.

Prayer of Family

The home dwelling is filled with supporting people. Let each of their lives run smoothly, Merciful God, and let the bond they share within the household strengthen them as people.

Prayer for Peace

Lord God, every day one human kills or hurts another, it is saddens us. If it is your will, let humans be able to go one more day without making war on each other.

Prayer for Love Disputes

As there are wars outside the house, there also are battles being fought inside, even by the most loving couples. Help these lovers find solutions to their arguments which is acceptable to all sides.

MUNE SHINRI

Prayer of Love

The heart is not something which can be controlled. Rather, Eternal and Loving God, let us ask for the greatest gift of all, to by our own efforts, find someone who naturally and genuinely loves us, and strengthen this bond. Help the probability so that the two of us may meet again and share a life, if this is the person chosen to be with me.

Prayer to Calm

This person has become upset by the waves and wind of life, Merciful God. Help them to find strength within the turmoil and find peace within their heart. Let them find rest in their weary life, so that tomorrow can be another day.

Soulmate Prayer

Unite this (person, object) with its truest mate, Lord God. Grant that as we ourselves seek after own soulmates and work toward happiness, that (Name, this object) may also find their mate. Allow me to unite the two speedily and efficiently. Let the Red Thread bind these two in Heaven.

(NOTE: This is typically more to find lost objects than true love, which is instead a prayer of love. Besides, a soulmate is not necessarily the most loved one, and can often serve more the role of a friend or sister than a lover.)

MUNE SHINRI

Prayer of House Blessing

Cleanse the soul of this house, Lord God, so that it may be lived in wipe out any evil spirits infecting the area, which may cause the house to deteriorate, and replace these with guardian spirits, so that this house may be a place of warmth and light, of love and family.

Prayer of Forest Blessing

Cleanse the soul of these woods, Lord God, so that plants and animals may settle here peacefully, watch over this land and keep it safe, and fill it with fertility, so that all manner of good things may spring forward from its soil.

Prayer of Nature

The forests cry out to you, Lord. Hear their prayer. Deliver them, please, from being chopped down without first showing apology to them, and help make sure that new trees are created in their place. Let not the forests rot away, Merciful God.

Prayer of God

Creator, Savior, and Holy Spirit, you are in Heaven and Earth, you even reside in the shadows of our own hearts. Let your name be holy, and let your will be done wherever it is asked, be it Earth as Heaven. Lord provide us with what we truly need, and what is needed to survive. Forgive us our own sins as we forgive others, and grant us courage when temptation comes. And deliver us from the hands of evil. Let you rule in power, love, and glory.

MUNE SHINRI

Section 2: Formal Prayers

MUNE SHINRI

Gogyou Prayer of Blessing

The Fire of passion cries out to you, Lord.

The Waters of longing cry out to you, Lord.

The Earth of devotion pleads to you, Lord.

The Wood of compassion beseeches you, Lord.

The Wind of courage addresses you, Lord.

Hear our prayer, and protect and bless this area with your Eternal Love. Let this place bring true holiness to the area around it, and let this be a monument for ages to come.

Kuji-In (Prayer of Exorcism)

Rin, pyou, tou, sha, kai, jin, retsu, sai, zen.

(Say each of these words in succession while making a symbol against evil to defend yourself against malevolent spirits.)

Christian Purification

In the name of Jesus Christ, I ask that all unwanted spirits which oppose God come out of him/her. My name is (*Name*). I ask this, not on my own authority, but on behalf of Jesus, who healed the sick, raised the dead, and banished demonic possession. He did this not to exorcise authority over others, but to comfort the souls of the possessed. As Mary Magdalene suffered under the influence of several demons, that other possessed often were cast out of their homes by the community, I ask that your soul find rest.

I do not command you in the name of Mary or saints, or any such thing. You are a person possessed of a spirit that is not the Spirit of the Lord. I ask that this spirit be cleansed by this *water and/or salt* and that the real spirit of this person return to them. Purify the negative influences of the outside world and their inner desires, and let them see themselves as God truly sees them. Set them free from this influence.

(Toss some water and some salt in the general area said to be influenced by evil. You may add some personal words to connect with that person. The practice of purification is different from exorcism, as it tries to resolve the underlying cause of possession in the first place, which is usually from an emotional or psychological cause)

In the name of the Creator, Savior, and Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

MUNE SHINRI

New Believer's Creed

I believe in God who created everything there is (visible and invisible), who forms the light and creates darkness, who bring prosperity and create disaster, who does all these things. I believe in God, timeless and immortal. It is not sensible to ask who created God, because God has always been, before there was time or events, before creation should have been possible to any other explanation. I believe God appointed us to be co-creators and stewards of this world. I believe in God who comes not only to save the Jews or Christians, or even good people, but who sent himself as Savior to suffer for our transgressions, to be pierced for our sake, and to be raised up just as Moses raised the serpent. I believe in God, who is not merely an impersonal faceless being, but who we have always known, but been unable to name or put a face to. I believe that when I die, I shall finally see God face to face.

I believe in Jesus, God's incarnation, who with the Creator existed before our worlds. Who wrestled with Jacob, who was present at Sodom and Gomorrah, who was seen as Lady Wisdom and the Word of God. I believe in Jesus, begotten not made, of one substance with the Creator. With the Creator and the Spirit, all things were made. I believe in Jesus who was born from the virgin birth through his mortal mother Mary, Jesus who fulfilled the law, Jesus who entered the East Gate as the Messiah, Jesus who was called Son of God, and Jesus who was King of the Jews. I believe in Jesus who was crucified for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. I believe Jesus suffered, died, was buried, and rose again to provide us grace and forgiveness of sins, and to live as a human so that forevermore God Is With Us. I believe that Jesus's death built the third Temple that Ezekiel foretold. And I believe that the East Gate is now closed, for there will be no more need for Messiah. Our sins are atoned for, even those who killed Jesus or denied him. Even the worst of us. I believe he rose from the dead, and appeared in forms not recognized by the disciples. I believe he continued to visit the disciples as much as they needed, until they were ready to preach the Gospel. And I believe that Jesus can appear to us too, in forms we may not recognize as Jesus. As women, the poor, even those who appear to hate the Gospel but who need it.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Logos, the Tao, the *Ruach ha Kodesh*, the Giver of Life, who is one with the Creator and Savior, and who was spoken of by prophets and sages.

I renounce notions that Mary is Mother of God, perpetually a virgin, or any such nonsense related to her. I renounce beliefs that she can intercede for sins, or that she is particularly blessed among women, for God chose the parents of Jesus from among righteous sinners. I renounce idolatry of saints, holy buildings, holy writings, or the idea that people are particularly holy. Only God is holy. I renounce Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as it is too similar to the Baal/Ishtar/Tammuz family trinity, choosing instead to say God is Creator, Savior, and Spirit but one God. And I renounce the idea of a Second Coming, for Jesus came again at his resurrection, and he is with us always.

And I renounce all statements that say Jesus couldn't be the Messiah because he wasn't a ruling king, didn't rebuild the Temple, or didn't free the Jews from oppression. God's purpose for the Messiah was to rebuild the Temple in the image Ezekiel saw of it, a spiritual Temple that had no veil, no separation of men and women, no distinction between Jew and Gentile, free or slave; in order to build this Temple, Herod's building needed to be destroyed. The Book of Samuel explained that God doesn't need kings, or temples built by human hands. And the Book of Daniel describes a kingdom that will last forever. This kingdom is already built, but the world seems evil because it is in denial by the sinful world.

I believe in one baptism for remission of sins, that Christ died for all sins, even those who live and die without ever knowing them, or who have committed great evil to repent for. I acknowledge the world to come, the resurrection of the dead, and the church as the Body of Christ. *Amen.*

MUNE SHINRI

Confession of Sins

Christ died for all sins, even those who never accept him. I may be tempted to believe this means I shouldn't confess my sins, but if we say we have no sin, we lie and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God is merciful. Therefore, I confess of my sins.

I confess that I may have left things undone. I may have become arrogant or complacent, lazy, or self-righteous. I may have felt the law no longer applied to me, or I may have failed to live up to my full potential. Help me to realize my flaws.

Likewise, I may have done a number of things. I may have refused to forgive others for their sins. I may have disobeyed my parents or my loved ones. I may have stolen, committed adultery, had unmarried sex or raped another, hurt other people, made an idol of something in this world, disobeyed human law, put the wishes or laws of humans ahead of your law, or anything else that I cannot think of right now. You have said that even wishing a person harm is as bad as though you murdered them, and even lusting after someone who is taken in our heart is as bad as adultery. Help us, Jesus, to recognize not only when we have obviously done wrong, but the seemingly minor sins. Give us grace, and forgive us sins, great and small. And help us to forgive others.

But God loved this world to such an extent that he gave his only Son to death on the cross. I pray now that God extend the same love to me, and that my sins be forgiven. As you have forgiven those who deserved little in my mind, forgive me also for what I have done that offends God or other people.

I am part of a larger community, we are part of the Body of Christ. All of us have failed and fallen short, we as people are not good or evil, but a mix of both. Help us to see ourselves as you see us. Forgive our sins, even when we feel as though we are unlovable. *Amen.*

Table Grace

(When you are at the table, it is customary to be thankful for the food, and whatever forces helped prepare it. Even a generic "*Itadakimasu*" or "Thanks for the meal" is better than saying nothing. But there are a number of other options...)

Baruch atah adonai elokeinu melech haolam...

(This is followed by different words for different foods)

... *Hamotzie lechem myn ha'aretz* (for bread)

... *Boreiy pree hagafen* (for wine and juice)

... *Boreiy minei mezonot* (usually for desserts or other food)

... *Boreiy pree ha'etz* (for fruits)

... *Boreiy pree ha'adamah* (for vegetables)

... *Shehakol Nihyah bidvaro* (for drinks, meat, fish, cheese)

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest. And let thy gifts to us be blessed.

Bless oh Lord, this food, and our lives to our service.

Lord, make us truly thankful for these and all other blessings. I ask this in Jesus Christ's name, *Amen.*

Lord, we thank You
for the food before us,
the friends beside us,
the love between us;
And Your Presence among us.
Amen.

MUNE SHINRI

Prayer of Protection

Lord, as I travel today, please travel with me. Protect me from all harm on my journey. You traveled with Moses on his journey in the wilderness, and again in his exile in the desert. You traveled with Noah when he built his ark. You traveled with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and his wives, and Joseph when he wound up in Israel. You protected them from harm, and led them to safety. Not only that, they found their life's purpose. Protect me as well. Protect also those that I care about, let them be safe from any misfortune or threats. You who travel with others, you are my God. *Amen.*

Communion Ceremony

(Bread is broken, wine and water are mixed in a glass)

Take this bread in memory that Christ gave his body for our sins.

(Repeated for each person, bread pieces are handed out)

Take this wine in memory that Christ shed his blood for our salvation.

(Repeated for each person, diluted wine is handed out, each person can either dip the bread in the wine, or drink it the wine and eat the bread separately)

Burial Ceremony

(A hole is dug, and either a coffin or urn is lowered into the ground. Alternatively, any other preparation may be used)

We celebrate the life of (*Name*). Remember that they are now with their God in the Afterlife. This life is temporary, but the dead live on in our hearts. Just as Jesus Christ died, and was raised from the dead, so also the dead live on as we cherish them. At this time, I ask that anyone who wishes will say some words on behalf of the deceased.

(One or more people are invited to speak)

We commit this body to the soil. Our bodies were made from the dust of the earth, but our souls were made in the image of God. And so, I dismiss you to celebrate the life of (*Name*) knowing that only our bodies die, not what is truly our selves. Go in peace.

(After this, a party is held in celebration of the person. The guests eat any food that was known as their favorite food, play their favorite music, and so on).

MUNE SHINRI

Wedding Ceremony

(Two people gather together, wearing wedding garments. I am pretty open about gay, lesbian, or transgender weddings. But I do think the wedding and ultimately the marriage is a solemn event, so I'm not into polygamy weddings, not taking the vows seriously and cheating on the bride or groom, or something like marrying your dog. I also strongly oppose arranged weddings, or those where one partner is coerced)

We come together today to witness the joining of this (*man/woman*) to this (*man/woman*). It doesn't matter to me what they look like together, for in Christ there is no male or female, Jew or Gentile, or any other distinctions. All of us are souls given these bodies of flesh for a time, and afterwards we return to our true souls.

From the start, Adam was formed out of the dust of the earth, a soul given a body. But Adam was lonely, and God took his rib or side, and made a partner for him. So it is, that all of us leaves mother and father, and seeks after our other half. And when we find them, we say, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."

(The ring is handed over, and slipped on the finger)

The ring is a symbol of eternity, that the two of you be joined to each other, heart and soul in life, and if the two of you desire, for as long as you both shall love.

Now, (*Name*) do you take (*Name*) to be your (*husband/wife*), to love, honor, and cherish for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as you both shall live?

(If he/she agrees, proceed)

And you, (*Name*) do you take (*Name*) to be your (*husband/wife*), to love, honor, and cherish for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as you both shall live?

(If he/she also agrees, proceed)

I now advise you that marriage is not a vow to be entered into lightly. If anyone can show of any just cause why the two of you may not be joined, let them speak now or forever hold their peace.

(Wait a few minutes, and if no objections, then proceed)

Very well, I now pronounce you (*husband/wife*) and (*husband/wife*). You may kiss.

Baptism

(The parents and relatives present a child to be baptized)

Water is the symbol of life: for without water there will be no life. We are born again in water.

Baptism cannot be entered into unwillingly, or without the consent of family. Do you here present this child (*Name*) to be baptized, promising to raise (*him/her*) up in your faith, and do you promise to teach them good from evil, trusting in God for their growth?

(If they agree, proceed)

Do you promise to show them not merely laws and rules, but also the grace of God?

(If they agree, proceed)

Very well. I baptize you with water in the name of the Creator,

(Dunks the child briefly)

and in the name of the Savior,

(uses water to make the sign of the cross on their forehead)

and I baptize you in the name of the Holy Spirit. Receive now water and the Holy Spirit.

(sprinkles water on them, and breathes on them)

Go now in peace, raising your child in the ways of faith and truth. *Amen*.

MUNE SHINRI

Part 5: Sayings

MUNE SHINRI

Love may wither, but the flowers of its field bloom again.

Gender is an illusion. The man dies, his soul enters a chrysalis and becomes a beautiful young girl. A woman dies, her soul enters a cocoon, and becomes a strong young boy.

All religion, all philosophy, does not provide meaning. It is but the framework for an empty house. An empty house is a prison, but if there is someone to hold you, that house becomes... a home.

Know that nothing is to be expected. If you expect something to happen, it will not happen. If you intend for something to happen, it might not happen. If you desire something to happen, it will happen provided there is no other interference. Remember that others also have desires.

A soul of wind (indecisiveness) creates problems for others. If you have a soul of wind, stay out of any decisions that involve the well-being of others and confine decisions to your needs.

Self-centered actions are not always a vice. In some cases, decisions you make concerning yourself will then help others. The difference is knowing if what you want might be wanted by others.

Beware the temptation to appear older. In this life, youth is a fleeting gift, and to squander it by faking age makes it fly by with even greater haste.

If you plant one tree, this tree may in the future become the Tree of Life. Take good care of it.

To find the essence of nature go to its source. Water is at the mouth of a river, fire is in the sun, earth comes from the depths, and air is all around us. To find love is to be at the source, for Love is the source of all things.

MUNE SHINRI

All temples are the same, they are built for worship. All hearts are the same, they are made to be filled with love. But just as the temple is sometimes empty or in bad shape, so too is the heart sometimes broken by pain and rejection.

Show others complete honesty, and ultimately, there will be nothing to hide from them. Even in the coldest night, the fires of your heart will keep you warm.

Having firsthand experience is not a sign of hypocrisy. One must be inside the belly of the fiend to know of its true stench.

A petty attitude toward others breeds forth a petty life.

Never be afraid of a job corrupting you (except politics or legal work, you can be afraid of that), instead value any job for its experience in terms of life. Even prostitution has some knowledge to learn.

Give all things up, climb mountains, cross deserts, and swim streams for love. When you have found it, you shall become yourself truly.

When love is rejected, monsters are born.

When a ruler is corrupt, the people are entitled to revolt; similarly, when God is corrupted you are entitled to get mad. The answer is not to renounce God, but rather to follow God's rule of Love with or without His help. For God helps those that help themselves.

Beware meddling with the affairs of others until you understand your own faults. This is hypocrisy.

Religion is a voluntary thing. A forced belief is not religion, it is indoctrination.

Children should be taught nothing but to know for themselves what they want and how to work towards it, and to care about others enough not hurt them. Other than this, they should enjoy life. To taint a child's mind is evil, regardless of what they are taught.

Beliefs can be delusions. It is more important what you can do with your faith.

All people fear darkness. They fear the dark because they fear death and the unknown. They fear death because death is parting, and the unknown is the uncertainty of the future. But death and life are one, and when you die, a plant will grow near your gravestone. In deepest darkness, shines the light.

MUNE SHINRI

Part 6: Tales

These tales are a mix of universal myths with some Shinto/Christian tales mixed in. In some cases, I even decided to blend to two sources, making new tales with the essential message of the original. There are also a few tales that are just personal myths.

In terms of myths and legends, I believe that all tales are fragments of the one true legend, the story of how God loves us, to such an extent that he sent his Son to save us. In fact, there are flood stories across the world, Jesus-like demigods well before Jesus arrived on the scene, and stories of destruction and such. Finally, there are stories of the end of the world. All of these stories are myths of one great myth: the story of Fall, Savior, and Return of the King.

MUNE SHINRI

The Dawn of Creation

In the beginning, only God, surrounded by Void. One day, God found the will through the use of the mysterious Tao to bring all things into Being. He looked out on the universe, and felt a great loneliness, a great Void. At the time, the Universe was but empty essence without being, and God was only the size of a grain of sand, containing all of Being within himself. God molded essence outward, until all the universe was part of God.

Through the act of expanding, the universe's law of Tao appointed planets and stars in its natural course, with planets to orbit the stars, and more massive planets to orbit less massive ones. The planets themselves began to bear fruit with whatever life they were capable of sustaining. Waters filled in valleys and caverns of planets, and gases filled in the heavens. In some planets, these gases were made of forms other than water, such as methane or hydrogen. Still, each planet served the purpose appointed it. Then God went to sleep and dreamed of living things. And that has been God's dream all of this time.

Story of God

God wasn't always as He is now. Before there were angels and heavenly hosts, earthly elementals, and of course the living beings, God existed alone. The universe was formless Void, so She wandered alone for hundreds, for thousands of years. But at the start, God had no concept of what it means to be God. Then God discovered that there were three aspects of himself. Like God, humans can create new life, by combining two aspects to create a third.

Yet still, the universe was formless, and although they tried their best to understand what they had just done, this practice did not apply to the creation of objects. Left to themselves, they began to use their hands, their hearts, and their minds. Having no needle or thread, She repeated the motions of weaving, making a tight ball. When planets were created, He practiced the art of gardening on a massive scale. They learned skills of creation and in turn gave being to all aspects of the living world. Whenever they wished to learn a new skill, they would become human to practice it, and return after the human's life was over. God loved these humans, and many of the other beings She created, so one day He decided to send himself as Savior to be among them. Having no other desire, She found a woman suitable for bearing this child. As God had learned of Her loneliness only by observing humans, He decided that She wanted a true human experience, not simply the wearing of human skin. So God was born as a human. Unfortunately, once achieving human form, this Savior began to see that human relationships had become flawed. So this Savior gave his life to attempt to repair them.

MUNE SHINRI

Dividing Day and Night

When the Earth was yet formed, the Sun and the Moon were united, and the Earth was covered with a gray desolate existence which lacked both joy and sorrow. They never slept, they never ate, and they could neither live nor die. So God, seeing that the Yin and Yang were intertwined too tightly, arranged to have them separate. But as they broke apart completely, God saw that this was just as unnatural. So She arranged to have them joined yet distinct, making them complements to each other. He then set them to tend to the day and night, shifting guards as one went dormant. But because they had shared time together, occasionally they felt the desire to join again, and when this coupling happened there would be what is called an eclipse.

The Dawn of Spirits

Next God decided She was in need of help in order to make repairs to this creation. It was created, but like most things in the span of infinity, the blink of an eye is all it takes to crumble into nothingness. So using His spirit, She fashioned beings of pure energy to maintain the natural world. These beings did not so much control nature, as they made sure it was in good repair, and that the laws of birth, death, and growth. These myriad spirits spread throughout Heaven and Earth. In Heaven, these spirits came to be known as angels, which spirits charged with preserving the Earth were called elementals.

The first angels were named the embodiment of cosmic Male and Female. From their union, came all other things.

The Dawn of Nature

God then created Nature itself. The plants and animals of various planets bloomed and gave seed, filling the Earth with a fine bounty of sentient beings. These beings could both act as helpers to mankind or to feed humans if they were desperate.

In the center, God planted His tree from which the roots of all other trees were brought forth. He named this tree, "the Tree of Life" and hid it underground away from the sight of humans. Eating from this tree would grant immortality, but at the cost of a species becoming extinct.

Out of the primal Being, God created water to fill the Earth, and gave life being within the water. She created volcanoes to blow hot gases throughout the air, and using fire molded dry land. God set moist clouds in the atmosphere, and set stars in the sky outside it. Finally, God created layers in the Heavens and the Earth, and gave a source of heat inside the Earth. Finally, after making a fire within the Earth, God made a fire outside it, which He called a sun. This sun was what powered everything from that day on, for without it even plants would not grow.

MUNE SHINRI

The Dawn of Humanity

Yet God was still alone in the universe. She inserted His essence into clay vessels, breathing Her breath into them. As God wanted both Her sexual natures to manifest in humanity, two molds were made. But the vessels were dry, and quite soft. So God heated His kiln and hardened the clay then filled it with water. She then planted a small seed (a soul) into each. The seed burst, and vines covered the inside of the jug. The seed's roots gave birth to other plants, which covered the inside of the jug, these later became internal organs. The water inside the jug became discolored and a muddy reddish color from mixing with the clay. Gradually though, it was soaked into the vines, making them into blood vessels. This is clearly why we have blood. As the jug tried to move, it twisted and shook until parts collapsed in shards. This is why we are fragmented and incomplete, why we need others and God. The vines hardened in places to form thick roots, which are now known as bones and muscles.

Other creatures elsewhere were created in similar ways with minor variations: some had no bones, some were without blood, still others seemed unable to move. These became the animals and plants of Earth. God created life in various stages in other planets, though some of it was rather simple.

MUNE SHINRI

Division of Tongues

There once was a man without fault in his speech, who merely needed to ask for something be it the throne of a kingdom, a lover, or any object, and it was his. Gradually, though he found that things didn't matter, and although he could secure a lover for a time, he had nobody who truly loved him for himself. Furthermore, since everyone admired him, he never had time to himself, even though he asked. So this man asked for advice from God. God said, "Cut your tongue into pieces." The man fearing the price of this request would leave him mute, did as instructed, and instead he found that he could speak a tongue that was strange to the rest of the world. But it was not good that he was lonely, so the man made one more request, that there were others like himself. So God allowed others to see what he had done, and each person divided their tongue in their own way. This is why there is not one but several tongues in the world, and why the tongue itself is divided down the middle. The man upon finding that only part of the population spoke his language, found someone who valued him among these people and was married.

The Destiny of Humans

God gave an order to mankind, in order to make their lives full and not bleak. She said, "Create!" They told stories, built monuments, and even conceived of the nature of God Himself as part of their worship of God. They began to perfect elaborate means of worship, bringing into being rituals for anything from rain to preventing volcano eruptions, even to heal wounds. Men and women lived in happiness, without oppression at this time, for they served God in the truest sense. There was no sin in their hearts, for they had not as yet done anything to separate them from God or their kindred.

MUNE SHINRI

The Fall of Humans

Unfortunately, all things crumble in time. Humanity became devoid of ambition and spirituality without even knowing it. They claimed they had both, but their ambitions had become no grander than self-centered career goals, and their spirituality had misunderstood the purpose of religion entirely, binding them in a moral code. Even mankind's essential elements of the Tao were in the order of opposition (see Gogyou Traits). They even denied the female nature of God, saying that God was only male. They used this as an excuse to give males and females unequal placement in the universe, and even marked sex incorrectly as a sin rather than an act of procreation.

The boredom of life led to a form of madness, and humans began to hurt each other to obtain their selfish desires. They ate animals not because of necessity but for fun. When evil acts were done, humanity gained knowledge of the difference between good and evil, and no longer designated them as part of a larger whole, the Tao. In their avarice to consume all things, they even sought underground after the Tree of Life, but God fearing that possessing the Tree would render them incapable of leaving their sin behind, further hid it beyond the realm of Earth. God appointed the spirit of storms, Susanoo to guard it in flame.

The Sages

Luckily, God had prepared a series of saviors to break the cycle of guilt and guide humanity back to its roots. But humanity would not listen to any of these, be they Buddha, Lao Tzu, or any other.

The Savior

And so, God sent himself as Savior to set people straight. Humanity was informed of such a thing as grace. We are meant to understand our faults, yet live as freely as the animals. But humans forgot this lesson, and spread various teachings, causing great confusion as to what teachings were real and which were false. Some said Jesus was fully human, others fully divine, still others that he was born a human and because divine. They worshiped Jesus instead of obeying his teachings. Or they worshiped Mary who was a mere human. Or they set up a bunch of theology about the Trinity, which is not the point at all.

Jesus died for our sins on the cross, thus we have grace. Jesus will come again. Jesus existed before being born from Mary. Jesus was called the Son of God and became human from a virgin birth. Jesus raised from the dead to show us that death has no power over us. And Jesus by being human, bridged the gap between God and man. Everything else is not relevant.

MUNE SHINRI

The Red Thread

One day, God looked down from Heaven and saw that although lovers made it to Heaven when they died, those who survived them were confused, and sometimes ended up overcome with sadness and despair, taking their own lives. These people who allowed sadness or despair to consume them ended up trapped in the hell of their own grief. God, was troubled by this, since he had made this abode for the spirits and the dead, so he prayed for intervention from the Tao. God, having made the world by weaving it from essence, joined the lovers together with a red thread. It was an easy color to spot, and the thread being strong enough to guide the lost lover to Heaven, this plan worked. It is said whenever two lovers are united in their hearts, a red thread binds them together, and the red thread will lead one who loves to Heaven.

Origin of Dreams

God saw that humans were losing touch with Him, so a portal was opened to the world of the afterlife. This portal allowed humanity to experience the future, the past, and the Afterlife. It allowed humans to create reality around them and regain touch with what they really believed in. The power to see glimpses of the future was also key to understanding the omniscience of God, for it was through dreams that such things as déjà vu came into being. The dream would run a cycle of a possible future, as it had been lived by another incarnation of the same human, which if repeated or changed, would be “remembered” by the person dreaming at a time when this future came near to pass.

MUNE SHINRI

The Lost Tale

There are many stories that spread from culture to culture, even lands apart. The story of the Flood, for instance, is present everywhere from South America to China, to Australia and the Middle East. There are stories of people who fit many of the traits of Jesus, from walking on water to a supernatural birth. There are stories of a woman who was not of this world. Some have her be a selkie, and have lost her pelt, but the same story is similar to the story of a robe related to Mount Fuji. In the latter story, she is a moon princess born inside a bamboo or something. Still other stories tell of a poor woman who marries a prince after some enchantment pimps out her outfit. Still others are about a woman waking up from slumber as a result of a curse, or a puppet or plush bunny becoming real (these are basically the same story, the story of coming out of dreamlike existence into reality). There is actually one story that blends all of these other common stories. That story has been lost to time.

MUNE SHINRI

Light & Darkness of Humans

After gaining knowledge of Good and Evil, the soul became Balanced. As such, it was unable to do Good or Evil, and through inaction, the world began to stagnate. God, fearing what She had created would fall to nothing, divided the human and all other living creatures into light and shadow, making them leave behind darkness wherever they went, and allowing them to be seen in a mirror. This divided self created a Light and Dark Conscience, allowing the person to make decisions. This is why we have such things as shadows and reflections. It is also why we are not crushed by indecision.

The Sword of Sorrow

The Sword of Sorrow was a creation long before human memory. It represented the purity of human compassion, and the ability to feel sadness from the loss of another.

The sword itself was made and carved entirely from bone, representing death as a part of the very fiber of humanity. It did not cut like a normal sword, but instead sliced through the dead spirits surrounding others. It had the power to bring the dearly departed second life, or to put the restless dead to their afterlife.

The Sword is part of the prophecy of the world's end, for it will be used to harvest souls from both good and evil, so that mankind may be dealt with compassion. Were it not so, those souls would be swallowed up when the Earth ceases to be.

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The Sage's Heart

The Sage held the Sword of Sorrow in his heart, waiting for the one to claim it. He said, "I would give this to my beloved."

A dying woman came forth. "You are not my beloved, yet I feel sorrow for you." With that he touched her with the sword's hilt and Death went out of her. She walked away happy.

A seductress came. He said, "You are not my beloved either, for if one comes to seduce the Sage with promises of false love or power, the world is forfeit." He touched her with the sword's blade, and she was put to death.

Finally, the woman most dear to the Sage came. He opened his heart to her, and gave her the Sword.

The Eternal Lover

The Sage who found his lover also found a connection to her. He was reborn again and again in different forms, destined to be near her. Sometimes they were siblings and could not bed together, sometimes they were separated by a distance, and he used his Heart Sense to find her. Sometimes, he was the female and she was the male, and sometimes they were the same sex. But whatever the restriction, they were soulmates and found a way to be with each other, even if only as friends.

MUNE SHINRI

The End of the World

None know the time or means of the world's end. And it is possible that a true end does not exist, only the appearance of one. But this is a possible way things will end. The world of spirit and the world of forms exist together, the forms being a reflection of the higher symbols. Just as Plato believed in a cave where those venturing out might be completely startled by the ultimate reality outside what is normally seen, these things share the world with each other when properly in balance. The body and spirit are one, and constantly in a relationship with each other.

If there is an end, the end will come when form and spirit are no longer one. This will happen when religions care more about whether their holy book is touched the wrong way and whether their women are dressed according to their arbitrary rules than true faith and piety. Or when people hurt or kill others for their beliefs, no longer accepting an afterlife, but believing that killing a person will end their impact in the lives of others.

Big governments will ignore humanity in favor of rigid rules, and there may be a rise of unelected mega-governments. Religion has no power over the state, and state has no power over religion, but when form and spirit are divorced, the state will see religion as a threat to its authority. When people know they cannot really die, they have no more fear.

And we should fear nothing of such things. Our world may one day pass away and such things as money, food, governments, or even temples may no longer matter.

If reality is cyclic, it may restart. If it is towards a purpose, we will be in a world that is slightly better. The reason not to fear government is that the more they hurt and oppress, the more likely they are to violate the mandate of heaven.

Remember, all you really need to fear is your own fear, since your fears create whatever end you see in the world. When you no longer have any fear, this world will end, because you no longer have need of it.

The End of the World is not the end of the world. If God wills it, he can recreate souls from the ones he has destroyed. When the end comes, we may be able to see God as we would a single person. Or God may have another plan entirely. Who cares? The important thing is to remember that God has the final say how things turn out, and not to worry.

MUNE SHINRI

The Author's Tale

I studied Christianity and Taoism, and other world religions before writing this book. I always had a great deal of interest in nature, religion, and martial arts, and searched for a way to incorporate them into the same whole. But I was lonely, and after several failed loves, I began to have a waking nightmare:

The Cold House

This nightmare was of a house surrounded by darkness and snow. The outside of the house gives off the impression that it is abandoned, and I feel sorrow when I think that it reveals my own fate, that I will live and die alone, and go on to this torment when I die.

Recently, I have taken steps to prevent this fortune from coming to pass, for I wish to find my own soulmate and care for her, as she may change this destiny.

The Cold House is around all of us. Too consumed by our troubles to reach out, to trust one another, we seek to heat our own spaces. But this is a drain on things. Like the house which is heated by trusting that heat rises, we have to know that we have people there who want to care for us.

MUNE SHINRI

Part 7: Natural Life

MUNE SHINRI

Section I: Finding of Food

Please note: this is not a complete list.

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Cat-Tail

Parts: Rootstocks, new shoots, pollen spikes

Uses: Vegetable, bread, soup, jelly.

Jelly can be extracted by straining off the juice from near the roots, the bread starch comes from grating and boiling the rootstocks and straining away the starch. In addition, the pollen may be made into bread flour, and by peeling off the outer layer of the stem, the whitish part proves good vegetable matter.

White Cedar

Parts: bark chips, young shoots

Uses: tea, soup.

The bark chips may be made into a tea, which seems to be foul tasting, but apparently works against forms of rheumatism. The early shoots may be made into a soup.

Hemlock

Parts: inner bark

Uses: bread

Mainly the western species is used for bread.

Fir/Spruce

Parts: inner bark

Uses: emergency food

This inner bark is stripped from either species and used as food. I heard of this in Russian History I believe.

Pine

Parts: inner bark, seeds

Uses: bread, nuts

The inner bark is peeled and dried, and ground into flour. The seed are roasted to remove their sap, and after which, they are eaten as nuts.

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Ostrich Fern

Parts: Fronds (before unrolling)

Uses: Asparagus substitute

Care should be taken, as sometimes Poison Hemlock resembles during certain stages of its life.

Lily

Parts: shoots, roots

Uses: Asparagus substitute, vegetable, drink

The roots can be boiled in diet drinks and are nutritious. The shoots can be used as a basic vegetable. However, they grow in a limited enough supply that harvesting may affect reproduction chances.

Wild Rose

Parts: Petals

Uses: Salad, relish, jelly

Pretty self explanatory. The rose is nice enough as salad greens, but also contains sweetness which may be extracted to make jellies.

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Wild Onion/Leek/Chives

Parts: stem, shoots, usually bulb, some flowers

Uses: seasoning, soups, general cooking

Unlike the lily above, the wild onion has no problem with being harvested, as the supply is decent. Also, nearly the whole plant can be used with the except of the wild onion bulb (only for the reason the it is too small and rather tough. The onion is rather versatile, it can even turn semi-sweet after long cooking. Unfortunately, this humble plant may need boiling to remove pungent flavor

Day-Lily

Parts: roots, flowers, bulbs

Uses: soup, cooking, root vegetable

The roots of the day-lily are like tubers and taste halfway between corn and salsify. The bulbs may be dried or pickled in salt. The ovaries of the flower should be removed if the flower is to be cooked.

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Birch

Parts: nuts

Uses: nuts, bread

The nuts may be ground into bread meal or eaten plain.

Hemp

Parts: seeds

Uses: eaten, cakes

The hemp seeds may be eaten or fried as cakes. Although the entire plant gets a bad rap due to drug use, the drug mainly comes from the resin in the leaves. Besides which, as was written on a box of Hemp Plus cereal, only one gender of the plant produces the toxin.

MUNE SHINRI

Kudzu

Parts: roots

Uses: bread, edible starch

Although the roots are quite useful, due to the sheer size of the plant, gathering is a hassle. The kudzu root may be cut into pieces and cleaned (probably peel outer layer), then dried to be eaten as a starch or ground as a crude flour

Pokeweed

Parts: young shoots, berries (with caution)

Uses: greens, sometimes berries

The pokeweed is both poisonous and edible, depending upon its treatment. The shoots are edible, until they turn purple, at which point they become toxic. The berries have the jury out and are not recommended, but supposedly, the berries may eaten be used for pies, so long as the seed pit is extracted intact. The seed pit itself is poisonous. The plant can be eaten mainly by boiling with many changes of water.

Milkweed

Parts: new shoots, flowers, leaves

Uses: asparagus, sugar, gum

The shoots may be cooked as asparagus, while the flowers release a fine brown sugar when boiled. The leaves may be broken to release a milky juice, which upon hardening may be used as gum

Mallow

Parts: root, other

Uses: sticky juice, soup

The root is cooked to release the juice. The rest of the plant may be used in a soup and the root is the main sweet part.

MUNE SHINRI

Seaweed/Lichen Types

Most seaweed appears to be edible. Dulse, Laver, Red Seaweed, Black Seaweed, and much of kelp species are edible. In addition, Irish Moss, Tree Lungwort, Reindeer Moss, Rock Tripe, and Iceland Moss are edible.

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Nut Types

Acorns are edible, though some of their bitterness needs removing by repeated washings. Hemp seed, walnuts, pine nuts, almonds, pecans, hickory nuts, chestnuts, and peanuts are all edible. Other seeds also may be edible but are not listed here.

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Fruit/Berry Types

Figs, peaches, junipers, pomegranates, mulberries, juneberries, goosberry, currants, cherries, strawberries, cranberries, raspberries, persimmons, blueberries, huckleberries, elderberries, blackberries, cloudberries, and plums are all edible. Some of these, like pawpaw and persimmons have toxins though (persimmon has an agent that can numb your tongue, and pawpaw has toxins in the skin and seeds).

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Section 2: Finding a Home

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Life in the Forest

You need to observe proper clothing particularly in an open forest, though sometimes a large grove of trees will block incoming weather to a fair extent. Also, one should avoid sleeping around tall grass without some sort of ground cover as insects and ticks might be a problem.

Mankind has made arbitrary laws on where you can and can't live, and has decided that many places are the "property" of another. Human beings do not own land, they rent it until they die. Still, it is necessary to be kind to other humans you share this earth with, so make arrangements for life with them. This might involve payment or some kind of work arrangement.

Perhaps the day will come when people can build land anywhere without disturbing others, but part of the condition of life is that we are not alone.

Life in the Mountains

The weather dress is even worse on a mountain, and you should probably wear extra layers. You should also see if you can build a house, even using dirt and vines would be better than nothing. Also, it is important to have flint and steel, or some other means of fire (if matches, make sure they are waterproof) as in extreme cases, you may need to boil snow to get water. Due to being cut off from most towns, increased knowledge of herbs and wild foods is important.

Traditionally, the mountains have been the dwelling place for sages, but with "modern" civilization and its worldly and irrational fears, some mountains are now publicly monitored, if not off-limits.

Life in a Cave

You may trade some of the cold weather to live inside in a cave, but the trade is increased closeness to potentially dangerous animals as roommates, including spiders, snakes, rats, and bears. This can be acceptable if the animals are cleared out, or perhaps lured with food. Still, you also need to protect against mold and damp weather. Remember that all life has upkeep to some tenant.

MUNE SHINRI

Life in Town

Not everyone chooses to live alone. Plenty of people choose to live in conventional society, because the alternatives above are lonely. This is okay. But remember, one's government is seldom one's friend. There is a story about a wild pig, who forages for roots and mushrooms. But then a farmer feeds him, and he gradually trusts the farmer more and more, until at last, the pig can no longer forage for itself. Then the farmer gives him to the slaughter. It is not always this bad, but one must be vigilant.

It is important to know skills, because skills keep you independent. Learn how to farm, how to use a weapon, how to hunt, and how to build simple shelters. For you do not know if the day will come when your government will come for you, because of your race, political beliefs, religion, your possessions, or even the clothing you wear, you will need to be armed. For you do not know if you will suddenly be priced out of a home, and need to figure out how to hunt and build shelter. For you do not know if one day, the farms which raise your food will fail through corruption and mismanagement.

Work jobs with others, pay taxes if living in town, and don't be a protestor. As much as possible, people should not be violent types, provided society stays civil. Yet never lose what you need to be independent.

Avoiding Credit

You should, whenever possible, try to pay with what you have. Credit is not only not particularly natural, it is a form of slavery, which subjects you to monthly payments possibly with no hope of escape. Ideally, as people stop using credit, this system of debt will collapse.

Luxuries

It is tempting to spend your money on the latest things, the newest phone, the shiniest car, the coolest device. But cool devices may have means of keeping tabs on people. Shiny and impressive things have a way of causing jealousy and violent theft, and desirable things often come with monthly fees. On the opposite end of the spectrum is big government trying to tax people on air, and telling others they don't deserve what they earned. In between this is you and me, those who own things but try not to let them own you. Buy things that contribute to the security of your house, and keep your luxuries as luxuries, rare expenses for fun.

Do not value money for its own sake, nor work solely for money. Money can inflate, stuff can clutter your house. Conveniences are nice, but more important is not trading off something else, since as income lost monthly. Neither should you allow what you own to chain or own you.

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Section 3: Healing

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Making Medicine

There are two distinct medicines which can be made from plants. The former is called a tonic, and the latter is called a poultice. A tonic is essentially a tea, with other substances such as honey or oil added. Depending upon how it

is made, and what it is used for, a tonic may be used internally or externally (a hair tonic is used externally as a shampoo, and is made by adding vegetable oils to the teal base)

The second is used for simple cuts and bruises, and to leach away irritation or pain. This is called a poultice, and is used externally. To make a poultice requires the herb cooked in water with oatmeal. The oatmeal paste absorbs all the essential oils, and nutrients from cooking the plant, and the resulting

mix is pressed to the skin using cheesecloth, keeping it there for a few days.

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Basic Herbal Medicine

Dandelion: Diuretic, kidney and liver disorders

Onion: Disinfectant

Tea Leaves: Anticoagulant, astringent

Myrrh: Insect repellent, antiseptic, astringent

Peach: General sickness

Oregano: Indigestion, headaches, swelling

Fennel: Menstrual cramps, gas, bloating

Slippery Elm: Wounds, coughs, and indigestion

Thyme: Menstrual cramps

Aloe: General wound healing

Poplar: Aspirin substitute

Basil: General stomach issues, cold, flu, fever, stimulus

Turmeric: Wounds, food poisoning, digestive problems, heart disease, and liver issues

Rosemary: Astringent, expectorant

Cinnamon: Helps diabetes, normalizes hormones, anti-vomiting, antiseptic, stimulant

Tomato: Antioxidant

Parsely: Suppressed menstruation, allergies, fever, blood pressure, heart conditions

Ginger: Diarrhea, nausea

Garlic: Disinfectant, lowers blood pressure, general immunity

MUNE SHINRI

Awakening Chi

The art of faith healing has nothing to do with prayer. Prayers are simply words without strong emotions tied to them. Instead, one should understand that these emotions can take form, as spiritual energy. Spiritual energy or *chi* exists in all people, and can be awakened by meditation or during tai chi exercises. The key to healing in this way is strong intent.

Healing in this way is learning to control the flow of chi in the body, and directing it to a specific area on the body of the self or another. This energy is the same carried out in the elements, and can be used to empower prayers, but here it is spread by touch and currents of energy.

In addition to simple areas of touch, there are also pressure points, lines and points where energy can be activated or deactivated, for best effect.

Finally, certain organs have a dominant element attached to them which governs their attributes. The same can be said about disease. Understanding how the elements work in relation to each other, and the organs, is key to faith healing.

Types of Healing

Of course, you can simply pray to have someone healed, and in fact this is usually more effective, since you do not need to know intimately how the body works. Aside from that, chi-based healing is a more direct approach.

There is a third type of healing, which is not usually mentioned, due to its great risk. This would be sacrificial healing. It can either be done with a prayer or by using spiritual energy, but it amounts to ask God, "Please, give me his cancer, pain, etc." Few are willing to go ahead with this, for obvious reasons. And usually this doesn't work, because such things, as I say, are very much about intent.

Healing the World

The same aura energy that awakens chi helps shape our reality, our good and our evil. The question is, what reality do we want? I have heard many idealists talk about "building a better world." While it is tempting to think of life in those terms, a better analogy would be to be "healing the world." I grew up in the 1980s, when video games and internet and computers were young. I lived in a small town where life was mostly quaint and peaceful. As it turns out though, things were happening below the surface that were not as cool. Big government/corporations, political correctness, and to say nothing of the constant poverty that always lurks below the surface.

We always have grandiose plans for the Earth, but maybe that's us never being satisfied, and we wouldn't like what we turn this world into. Probably the better model for this world is to heal it. There's an saying, "Let no one say, and say to your shame, that all was beautiful until you came," things as they were in your childhood are probably the ideal, the only difference is to make things real. To have that small town or cool city or however stuff was like then, but do something about the below the surface falsehood, the dreams that were frauds, and sadness in the world to make things like the image you saw behind the screen (a Deltora Quest reference).

Aiken no Michi

AIKEN NO MICHU

Curse of Aiken

I have written the *Mune Shinri* as advice for developing personal faith, for determining your own life. However, to those who cannot, who let doctors or bosses or rulers run their lives, these words are a condemnation. They are like a curse.

And yet, to those who seek to live their lives, to follow their faith as an ultimate concern, these words are also a curse, of a sort that I wouldn't wish on my worst foe. For if you live according to a path between you and God, disregarding what "experts" or even so-called "friends" or "reasonable people" say in regards to your path, you stand to lose everything. Friends may reject you, you may be cast out from places, you may lose your job or your home, and you may become an outcast. You may lose your freedom and become isolated.

But you will lose other things as well. You will lose the ability to care about people who aren't really your friend. You will lose your attachment to things that can be taken so easily. You will lose your fear of death (for death is not really the end). You may lose your fear of things that stop you from living your best life, too.

To those promise safety, peace, success, and happiness by following the mortal forces of this world, remember that they demand absolute loyalty. Yet how loyal are they? One day, you may have wealth and fame, and the next you are nonessential. The curse of the Aiken faith is great, yet the curse of rejecting your own principles and betraying your faith is the crushing of your spirit in exchange for worthless paper they call money.

Banality of Evil

Much of this book seems extremely edgy. Either it is shockingly religious from a perspective that it neither fits neatly in Christianity nor atheism nor other existing religion, or it is shocking in its political subject matter given that it is a religious work. I don't intend to write this simply to get a response, but in order to wake people up. The average person is "just doing their job," going through the motions of their life, living on auto-pilot. During the Nazi period, there were plenty of bureaucrats that just signed papers and stamped forms. These weren't even the soldiers, they were people so removed from what they were doing and how it impacted others, that they didn't connect registering Jews and setting up tightened checkpoints with trying to capture Jews and stuff them in gas chambers and furnaces.

In the same way, many people who work in food stores and follow the mask mandates of 2020 don't understand that saying people must wear masks to enter, doesn't actually keep anyone safer but denies hungry people who object to masks what they need, and increases a system of fear and oppression. When people blindly follow rules instead of examining their lives, terrible things happen.

AIKEN NO MICHİ

Ultimate Concern

Paul Tillich said that faith is the ultimate concern. That is, there is no such thing as an atheist (only a secular statist), because all people have a “god” or a central person or idea to their worldview. Sometimes this is an actual person of the Creator of the universe (God), other times this “god” or ultimate concern turns out to be some idea of luck or fate instead.

Well you ask, what about socialism or secular reality? Couldn't any such concern work as well as another? Well, Paul Tillich said the Christianity had two ways that it was superior to things like Marxism or some sort of religious fundamentalist theocracy (like Sharia law or a polytheistic ancient Roman state): the ability to sacrifice and the ability to change. That is to say, when the Roman Catholic church viewed itself as infallible, things got very very bad, because anything wrong could not be fixed. Likewise, whether government or religion, as soon as one's way becomes an absolute one-size-fits-all to be applied to all people. When this happens, not only to you have a totalitarianism, but the glaring flaws in your beliefs begin to manifest. For instance, Communism has economic flaws and inefficiency. In fact, when these absolutist worldviews are questioned, they typically defend their ideals not with reason or logic but with force.

Your faith is an ultimate concern to you. And whenever life shows you something wrong with it (for example, the view of Aiken being about bonds and boundaries is okay, only until we have a society that isn't so strictly separated that people are isolated from each other, as in COVID-19 fear). Your beliefs are a living thing like yourself. They ought to adjust when you find something wrong with your thinking. When my belief in boundaries is practiced by all, and I notice something wrong with it, I will say so. So yes, it is wrong to isolate.

The true measure of whether an ultimate concern is of value is sacrifice. Can the concern be set aside to produce some good (as Jesus sacrificed his future as a potential Messiah to instead be a Savior)? And are you willing to value this more than your life, and indeed to risk your life for this concern?

If the answer is not yes to either of these, this is a means to an end, not an ultimate concern. So also, our concern should place value on humanity. Beliefs or paths should not create slaves or sacrifices to some high ideal, they should concern themselves with mankind created in God's image, and their future as spiritual beings. This is the issue with Revelation, it sacrifices sinners that Jesus forgave.

Likewise, faith is the ultimate concern, because when we concern ourselves with the ultimate, we focus on the things that matter. What is life, what is death? How do I live a meaningful life? Is there an afterlife? Should I worry about the political or social things in this world? Or is there something more important?

AIKEN NO MICHU

Personal Faith

Aiken religion is not a national religion or even a regional religion, but a personal religion. That is, this book as written is what I determine meaningful to my own faith. As far as I'm concerned, there are only a few universal teachings to Aiken: bonds and boundaries. Regardless of where your faith leads you, and it may be different even among members of the same family, the core teaching of Aiken is that human beings are meant to be bonded or in a relationship with each other, just as you are developing a personal relationship with God. Love others, love yourself, love God. Whether you're an atheist or have your own beliefs about God doesn't matter, whatever is of highest value to you is the object of your worship, your "heart truth" and how you use it to treat other living beings (not just humans but also how you treat animals). Likewise, boundaries are such that one respects the rights of others, and expects the same of them. At the very least, one should not go around raping or killing people. You don't have the right to the consent or the life of others. Nor should you contemplate killing pets.

Aiken rejects "corporate worship." To have your faith led by a collective is to have a company. We have God there whenever two or three are gathered together, and we are saved not by ourselves but by God. This is not a "corporation" this is a gathering of friends in prayer. We don't need priests, we just gather with our families and friends.

When you have your personal beliefs straightened out, you can then set your priorities and not live life afraid of death. So what happens if you fail at this, you ask? Do you go to Aiken hell? Do you get shunned or have awkward stares from hairy women? Not at all! But the problem of religion when you fail to keep good boundaries is that you either become used or a user, and tend not to like yourself very much. Boundaries are there as a sort of guardrail to fucking your life over. That said, I believe forgiveness is a thing. Just try not to be cruel, and try to not get yourself hurt by others. Other than that, you should believe what you want, but remember it's *your* faith and you don't have the right to impose it on others. The only time you really should interfere in the lives of others is possibly to help save it.

Belief is Opinion

All beliefs are simply opinions. The idea that one can "prove" their beliefs about anything is not logical. Beliefs are strongly held opinions. They are at the core of who that person is, which is why if someone's beliefs are trashed they get upset. Beliefs as such, are personal property. This is why I speak against forcible conversion. It's theft.

But ultimately the idea that you can prove belief is that you are saying belief is knowledge. While there are logical elements to religion, the belief aspect is about feelings. Logic simply helps persuade us of what we feel, but it is not proof of religion.

For Better or Worse

Unlike the Muslims, we are not to say that everything is the will of God, and take no actions to improve things. If your roof leaks, get it fixed! If you have no food and little money, you can grow crops. And if you are gaining weight, you may exercise.

Yet we are also married to God. We are committed, for better or worse. Whether we lose all of our friends, whether the lights go out, whether we are arrested, we make a choice whether to take things in stride or be angry at God. Just as a marriage to a human, our marriage to God is a relationship. It is not terrible to yell at God sometimes, nor is it terrible to accept what God gives us, but we try our best to have a healthy relationship.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Fear is the Mind Killer

This is another quote title, this one being from *Dune*. Fear is something which allows reality to control us. We fear, because we believe that this disease, that bullet, or the train over there will kill us if it comes into contact with us. But what we actually should fear is our own fear. Fear is an important brake for other other issues, such as mania or reckless behavior. If people had no fear at all, they would calmly walk off a cliff. All the same, we should not throw our lives away. There are three extremes: trying to lord over others, to set a teaching based on personal need only or living just to survive, and to test God by throwing your life away. These were the temptations of Jesus. We should live, not merely survive.

Fear also connects us to other humans, we fear for those we love and who we care about getting hurt. There is an important relationship between fear and love. Yet just as rage can be righteous but also toxic, fear can paralyze us in a life we don't want.

Suppose you lived in fear that one day tigers would break from their cages at a zoo, and make it all the way to your house in order to attack you if you went outside. Obviously this fear is absurd, but people are just as frightened of getting a disease that if it exists at all, is mainly a phenomenon of global economy. In a big city, people might have reason to be afraid, but small towns are completely different. Whether a fear is rational or not, it cripples people. Facing our fears helps expose us to what is really going on. We not only become more ready to deal with things but we learn more about what drives us. This is called exposure therapy. We face the things we fear to put the lie to the notion that they are as terrifying as they appear.

Fear stresses us out because we believe in a materialist worldview. Fear in Judaism and Christianity, is strongly associated with worship. We have an expression "fearing the Lord." That is to say that we understand that God is the one to fear. Even those claiming to be Jewish or Christian or whatever may still get caught in a trap of believing that this world is to be valued more than what lies beyond. The material world wants us to believe that avoiding death is the most important thing. But it isn't. Likewise, there are things worth more to us than our own life. If your dearest love were in danger, would you stand in the way of whoever or whatever threatened her/him? If a cause you deeply cared about was threatened, would you risk your life to protect it? Hell, you might even risk your life to save a kitten! These causes bring meaning to our lives, and make them worth living. Therefore, they are also worth dying for.

Regardless of Warnings

This is another quote title, this one being from *Kingdom Hearts*. The full quote is a lyric, "Regardless of warnings, the future doesn't scare me at all." We are not to fear dire prophecies told by angels of light. We are to live an earnest and humble life, and pursue righteousness. Neither angels that tell us false blessings of "peace, peace" when there is no peace, nor accusing angels that tell that our sins have separated us from God, when nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ. Keep sober, keep watchful, but remember that God so loved us that he sent Christ to provide us with grace by death on a cross. What do we need warnings from angels for? And what do we need blessings for? Remember that even Lucifer may appear as an angel of light. And remember that any, even an angel, that preaches a gospel opposed to the one already given is under a curse. For myself, I shall not trust experts, visions, or even a weather forecast. If God wants to speak to us, he can always find a way, without resorting to nonsense.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Principles Under Adverse Situations

The *Tao te Ching* has a series of expressions along the lines of “When you love/forgive those who are unlovable/unforgiving, you have love/forgiveness.” While this book mentions things it thinks you ought to be doing, overall it values even bad choices. This is because I acknowledge that any principle is impossible to live up to, so people ought to be forgiven, but also because the true measure of a value is how it stacks up under duress. If you speak of high values, yet cannot live up to them for people who are not like you, better *not* to speak of high values. Choose what to value and be consistent, at the very least.

Free Will vs Do As You Will

Much of the words of this book reflects a certain mindset. “I’ll do what I want, when I want, because it’s my rules and what I say goes.” This approach is called antinomianism, and I’ll do my best to curb it. Its opposite is perfectionism which has the flaws of forever trying to measure up either to one’s own moral perfection or to an impossible standard of another. In Christianity, too much attention to such rules is called the Curse of the Law. A person sets up rules but they will fail, antinomianism is called licentious behavior

This stubborn mindset is akin to someone saying “I’ll do it myself” when they don’t know how to do it. Imagine someone trying to put together a scuba gear themselves with no training. When you’re stubborn, you can create problems for yourself that others have to fix for you.

That isn’t to say we ought to devote ourselves wholly to the moral standards of others. I would be the first to tell people that this is not the way to go about things. Rather, a person is probably best off when they manage to balance their own needs in some way with that of others. To ask for help, to learn to clean up some of their own messes, and to be able to function alone or within society.

Unhealthy extremes are not ideal. Ask for help, and help yourself. The same for your philosophy.

What I strongly oppose is “do whatever you want as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone.” This is repackaging Wiccan ideas which say, “*That it harm none, do as thou wilt*.” But the problem is, irresponsible behavior *does* hurt people. For example, the 1960s free love period? Well, the fallout was a nasty string of divorces, and a screwed up mentality that made the next generation unlikely to have healthy relationships either. The so-called feminism created women with no realistic expectations for themselves or men, rather than healthy women who understood what they want from life. And this “free love” created an abortion epidemic that continues to this day.

Faith as Science

Doubling Thomas famously has to touch the hands and side of Jesus before he believes. While Jesus praises those who believe without seeing, it is not a crime to want proof. In fact, I find that the same questioning mindset that makes a good scientist makes a good believer. They are not held in sway by consensus or experts or ancient writings. They judge the facts on their own merits. To me, if you let some rabbi or imam or Pope tell you what to think, you’re basically a cultist. Consensus does not make something false correct. What makes something correct is our own opinions (for no amount of facts will convince us personally if we disbelieve in the premise), and our sense of logic and reason. Just like Lee Strobel, we should treat our religious assumptions like an investigative reporter, getting the facts and analyzing them before coming to our religious faith. If not, how can we be sure we are not being misled into worshipping idols, not God?

AIKEN NO MICHII

Wizard's First Rule

Many of the titles of this book for chapters are from popular culture. This one is from a book series by Terry Goodkind. According to that, "People will believe anything, because they want it to be true, or because they fear it is true."

Most lies that people believe, they are told by their state, but religions are not blameless either. "Do as we say, or you are going to Hell" is one example, though far less immediately terrifying as telling people that swimming within thirty minutes will cause you to cramp and drown. But this is just something mothers tell children so they don't have to watch them at all times, and can have thirty minutes to themselves. Or to mess with them, I'm not sure which.

Likewise, people believe a number of things to be true because they want them to be true. For example, many people believe the lottery is all about good fortune and that one day you will win big and be able to straighten out all of your problems. In reality, lottery is a tax on the stupid. The same risk behaviors that make it so you bet and won the lottery also mean you are unlikely to wisely invest it, and instead end up in debt or dead. Or you risk a substantial amount of money on tickets and never win anything. All because you wanted to believe lies about getting lucky.

Live a life without clinging to false hope or false fear. Your true hope is that the one who created you gave you a soul that is able to live. When that soul leaves a body, the body immediately stops working and decomposes within hours. You have nothing really to be afraid of except your own fear, and false hopes delude the mind. Understand what is real, and reject falsehoods.

The Lord your God is One

"Hear o Israel, the Lord your God is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." What does it mean that God is One? It means that God is a unity consciousness. That such things as good or evil are irrelevant to him. That God is present through us and those we care about. But God is also present among our enemies. We talk of evil only in this world.

Likewise, you have to respect yourself. There are plenty of people who can mistreat you, but you have to keep searching for a more perfect relationship, and not just with people who are easy to like. Maybe some friends leave, maybe other friends are only friends when you agree with them. God is among your friends and your enemies. Your enemies give you something to stand against. When we say good or evil, we do not mean that I hold any kind of license on morality, but that those who harm others are overstepping their bounds. God gives rain to both those we see as good and those we see as evil.

AIKEN NO MICHI

The Terror of Fascism

We like to throw the word fascist around. Especially the left, who lives in fear that fascism will take over and we will be left with terrible times. But before that, you need to understand that the original principle of fascism dates back to a bundle of sticks and how they easily broke, yet were stronger bundled together. "Stronger together." Hmm... doesn't sound like any presidential candidate any of us know, right? Oh wait no, Hillary Clinton said that.

The actual idea of fascism, is that there is state paternalism. That is, "make (this country) great." This should sound familiar to what Trump says, but it is still fine as long as there is an important distinction. The absence of the element of altruism.

1. Does making this country great mean you make your own life great? That you have a good house, good income, and have good good sex with your husband/wife/gay partner? And are most people in the country are employed and have decent incomes? This is not a fascism. Not even if they are deeply xenophobic and throw out all immigrants. This is just nationalistic capitalism.
2. Does making the country better mean sacrificing for the good of the country? Like during WWII, they made more and more bombs until they had enough to fight the war, and everyone had fun being on food rations because "it's going to the war effort." And people set aside detergents, nylons, etc. Likewise doing your part to prevent some disease everyone is scared of, as was later the case during the earlier Spanish Flu with mask wearing. This is fascism.
3. Do you reject the idea of fascism, in favor of making the poor, the immigrants, etc happy? Does this charity begin with the idea that the rich and middle class and the native-born sacrifice increasing amounts of taxes to pay for the success of others? This would be socialism, but amounts to the same (sacrifice of self).

Meng Tzu said that the government should tax not more than 10%, give all people their land (because their land helps the state), plant certain trees, and give people silkworms. They are fed, clothed, sheltered, and happy, therefore they willingly tithe their excess to the state. Meng Tzu (as well as Confucius) was suppressed under the communist regime. Based on this model, I don't think many people were happy under communism and its "equality for all." Equally poor, more like.

The antidote for for fascism then, is not as many believe, to live in a socialist state. It is to understand that capitalism is an alternative. Is it a perfect alternative? No, some people will get very rich while others don't do as well, but even as I realize that I will likely become a starving artist, I am greatly more fulfilled than I would be with someone standing over my shoulder telling me that I need to write what is for the good of the state or the people. I would be more fulfilled with someone by my side than over my shoulder.

AIKEN NO MICHU

What is Justice?

Certain groups like to use the word “justice” in ways that no sane or reasonable person would agree, on examining the end effects. But as you readers are probably aware, people are not necessarily sane or reasonable. They use it to explain away payback or so-called fairness.

Justice is not payback. Suppose for a second, that your racial or religious group who has suffered mistreatment or oppression for centuries. So you ask for equality, and more equality until you are more equal than them. You don’t stop at things being fair, you want payback. Only the problem is, now they want payback. And so on...

Nor is justice fairness. Suppose we ignore rich or poor, good or bad, to treat everyone equally. Some would call this justice. If you treat everyone as equal what happens when one person robs or hurts another wouldn’t that put others at risk? Treating them the same as those who never tried to hurt anyone ignores people caught in the results of their actions. The “fair” thing to do might be to act like nothing happened. But human beings wouldn’t accept this.

Justice is the balancing of law against grace. If you extend grace to everyone equally, you are certainly fair, but what about those who reject your grace and hurt others? Jesus spoke a parable about a man inviting others to a wedding party. He invited his dearest friends but they made excuses not to go, and he invited again, even telling them about a great feast. Some of them killed the servants. So he sent soldiers to destroy them, and instead invited people from all over to the wedding. But if you ignore grace entirely to focus on the law, people have no hope and accuse you of cruelty. We treat all people as good, and avoid hurting others. But we must understand punishment is necessary to renew a relationship. This does not mean go out and kill people we think are wicked though. Do we know if we see things clearly? If people are punished, they should be alive to reflect on their actions.

A person truly seeking justice should keep in mind that they are evil. That it is not right to take the lives or freedom of others, but those people have acted against the rights of others, taken away their lives or freedom. Those seeking justice should not wrap themselves in the banner of the law, but rather be one of two groups. Such people should be either vigilantes or bounty hunters. Governments should not employ regular salaried police. These people believe their actions maintain law and order, and they assist in people being arrested for minor crimes. Stealing a loaf of bread because your sister was dying of hunger? Nineteen years, villain! A bounty hunter, by contrast, is too greedy to care about minor crimes.

Justice therefore is mercy tempered with strength. It is knowing that to sentence others to death is by definition wrong. The trouble is, our justice system can be extreme. Justice must be a sort of balance.

AIKEN NO MICHII

Tools of Ignorance

Masks don't work. I believe this strongly because my aunt foolishly reused masks until they were dirty and now is on a respirator tank. I believe this because a family friend wore masks in sets of three, and got way sicker than just going without a mask. When the body is covered, it sweats. Such sweat builds and cultivates things like dust and mold. When you breathe, you need unrestricted access to clean air. If a virus is smaller than air particles, any virus goes through unimpeded. To say nothing of things like pneumonia. Masks are just objects, but what they represent is deception. Or rather, cooperation in a lie. I will not participate in a lie that makes businesses struggle, that makes those with phobias or objections into Untouchables.

But this is not about wearing masks or any disease in particular. Human beings who are free ought to wear what they want. Women should be able to be able to dress however they want, men ought to likewise be able to wear even makeup and dresses. When society is truly free, we don't need to push these things as social agenda. They are our rights by nature. I oppose hijab or any religious taboos. Masks, armor, and gloves are all the "tools of ignorance" or equipment used by catchers. But these are also tools of ignorance for society. Neither religion nor government should impose restrictions on clothing. These things are totems, things we wear because we believe they can protect us. But this is a form of idolatry. And life is inherently unsafe.

I will not stop anyone from making clothing decisions. It's when you don't have choices that it's a problem. It's when it's about fear.

Germ Theory and Medicine

What makes a body sick or well? Is it tiny particles we call germs? Wouldn't it make sense then that you would have to come in contact with not only other people, but new people in order to spread a disease? That is, you could not catch a disease by being in a small town where there are no strangers or visitors, only from a major port.

Let us assume there is a new disease. If you have no symptoms, and exchange no body fluids, how can this spread? To asymptomatic means you are not contagious. Here's how disease really works in my opinion. We get sick or healthy based on the condition of body and spirit. This is why you have aches and pains when severely depressed. So what about when you're afraid? Fear literally makes people sick. Faith makes us well.

If everyone suspects someone *else* of having something, whether it is luck, privilege, or a disease, yet nobody can locate someone who clearly does have this, odds are the thing in question is an illusion.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Mark of the Beast

When one reads the apocalyptic literature an image of people being forced to take a Mark shows up. But what exactly is this? Well, it could be some ritual branding, it could be RFID chips, or it could be some sort of machine-written barcode. But this is thinking too small. A Mark is equated with anything that interferes with the basic premise that "In God We Trust," that our currency is used by our leaders with consent from God under the condition that our leaders also rule with the consent of those governed. When they abuse this power, humans are treated like animals. And how are animals treated? They are given marks of ownership. They are tattooed or branded, they are given rings on their nose. They are not allowed to enter areas without certain credentials.

Marks are used to separate the "worthy" from the "nonessential." But all are worthy to God. What you should remember is whose you are. For you are married to God. You are his, and he is yours. For he loves you, and cares for your freedom and happiness.

Aside from that, I reject apocalyptic literature. These things are part of the folly of man, not our ultimate concern. Let them be exposed as lies, let them fall apart. My concern is the untold suffering that human wickedness causes. Remember, nothing can separate us from the love of God. So these things at worst are human waywardness.

Against Genetic Tampering

Our bodies, our spirits, and our souls are a gift from God. Yet men of science regard us as common animals. How they treat animals is deplorable, from breeding experiments, to inserting chips inside to track their every movement, to laboratory tests after which they are usually put down. So much for man's best friend. Animals don't even deserve to be treated like animals. Yet we want to treat humans this way?

Our food is bombarded with fake genetically modified alterations, many of which are produced by viruses. If we get sick from this, they recommend we get vaccinated. But what manner of "cure" is that?

Suppose some scientist found a cure for death. Would you want it, if more than 50% of those who use it died? And what of those who survived? Life is pain. Life is bearable because pain ends. God promises us life after death. Science promises an endless life filled with fear, suffering, and oppression. How about no?

Our physical bodies are not intended to be immortal. We are supposed to live and die. We are not to commit suicide. But when we pass on, then we may live forever. This world is meant to be imperfect.

True Trinity vs False Trinity

The real Trinity is mentioned in the Old Testament. That is, God as Creator of heaven and earth (Yahweh), the "man" Jacob wrestled/Angel of the Lord/Wisdom who interacts directly with humanity (Jesus), and the Spirit of the Lord (Holy Spirit) that is in all people and probably all living things. This is not three "Gods", nor anything like that, but One God with three aspects.

By contrast, the Catholic church venerates Mary as "blessed", says that she was a perpetual virgin, that like Enoch she went straight to Heaven without dying, that she forgives sins, that she is the Mother of God and the Bride of God. Not only is this patently false (nobody but God and Jesus can forgive sins, Mary had at least four sons aside from Jesus, and several daughters, she herself was sinful and in need of a Savior, and she was an ordinary human, not Mother or Bride of anything). At the root of this false teaching is Egyptian and Babylonian family cults, such as Osiris, Isis, and Horus or Baal, Ishtar, and Tammuz. We must reject this image of a family trinity, and instead understand the Holy Trinity, not as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but as Creator, Savior, and Spirit. God is a single entity with many aspects, not an heir of Babylonian culture. We must reject as unsound such teachings. We are not to venerate Mary.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Dispense with Hierarchy

To tell the truth, priests aren't all that necessary. Aiken believes that all believers are priests, in the actual sense of the word. It rejects the idea of ordination. It accepts that priests can be educated in theology, but knowledge is the key part. Credentials are simply worthless scraps of paper. Knowing about religion, being able to inspire and lead other people, to fill others with hope and love, these are things needed for a priest. But a musician in a band can do them as easily.

In fact, the only reason for a priest is to handle weddings, baptisms, and funerals. As our world has become increasingly legalist, many believe that we require legal weddings to confer rights of marriage. But we don't. Aiken practices ceremonial weddings, whether a lawyer decides they are legal or not is up to the lawyer. "By the power vested in me by..." but Aiken priests don't believe in vested power. God gives power to all of us. Priests are regular people who decide to help two people join together. Not to assist lawyers, but to perform ceremonies.

As for bishops, archdeacons, a Pope, or any other high religious office, I have come across many of these as a child of a priest, and ultimately I have concluded these people at best only practice senseless rituals at the expense of real spirituality, and they are politicians at worst. Like politicians everywhere, they want to control the lives of others. When people needed them to be an examples, instead they told everyone to stay away from each other and stay safe. They closed the churches even when other businesses were fine. The bishops, in fact, behaved at least as badly as our so-called governors. We don't need priests. We don't need religious hierarchy. We need people of faith, and to spend time with each other.

We need a new style of religion, one where people meet together to worship God without meddling from people in fancy robes. To be united with God, we must sacrifice our priesthood.

This also applies to state hierarchy as well. There is no reason people have to go through four channels just to change their name on an identification form. And why do you need to contact several bureaucrats to start up a coffee shop? Hierarchy stagnates creativity and new thoughts. If a person wants to invent something, to draw, or to write a novel, and it has to go through a review board to see if it offends some leader in China or North Korea, that idea dies on the table.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Aiken has no Temples

As Aiken believes in personal belief and the idea of doing your own spiritual study, and it rejects the idea of object worship. Aiken is barely a religion. There are no holy places, no sacred books, or holy men. Sorry, I'm afraid being officially recognized as a religion might be tough. What makes a land holy is when people gather to worship.

In *Mune Shinri*, I outlined an ideal church from what I understood it. In reality though, I have never managed (though I think a friend once tried to build it) due to lack of funds. Ultimately, having been to one church that was sort like my ideal, I decided it was a huge mess. And so, I realized that things that I originally valued were poor priorities. So I sought to understand my own faith.

Instead of a temple of its own, the followers of Aiken should decide where to worship. Some may worship in mosques or synagogues or churches, some might worship at home, and still others might worship outside. The idea of buildings being necessary for a religion to exist is one probably contrived by real estate salesmen. To tell the truth, if your faith can exist one day and not exist the next because a property tax is paid or not, or because a bishop decides they want to sell the land, or because that building has wood rot, then you don't have faith in the first place. Faith is something that comes from the heart and mind, not from how many people agree with you, and not from what you own.

When people are not allowed inside houses of worship due to rumor of disease, then a house of worship is of little use. Aiken allows worship anywhere. To sing, dance, read words that fill the spirit and inspire the soul, to hear lessons or sermons, and to meet with others... all of these are worship. Whatever individual beliefs you may have, worship is the act of meeting friends and reconnecting on an emotional and spiritual level. This can be done at a music concert as easily as a temple. Because the true meaning of religion is relationship.

What of declarations that singing can spread impurity? That people can get sick if they drink wine together? These are absurd lies. Not only are secular places like the liquor shops just fine with no legal red tape, but singing actually improves the respiratory system. Meanwhile wearing a mask traps dirty and musty air together with mold, and floods the lungs. The true purpose for preventing such things is that when people sing, they feel joyful. The only way to trap people in fear is to prevent them from realizing hope and joy. Only demons and evil people would spread such a lie that singing and alcohol are wrong.

Hold services outside in the woods. Hold them at homes. Hold them at graveyards. Wherever people feel comfortable gathering, this will be a tent for God to meet with you. God doesn't need a house built with human hands. He needs a tent to travel with his people.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Tradition and Nature

Aiken is not a pantheism. It does not worship the outdoors as somehow sacred on its own. Rather it understands that places, no matter how inspiring they look, are not holy on their own. Rather, the divinity of this world extends from its being created by God. Aiken, is a syncretic panentheism. To distinguish the two, pantheism is more compatible with scientific atheism than with many of the theistic religions. Pantheism worships the universe as God, while panentheism recognizes that God is in the universe, as well as present in all people. We are the Body of Christ. This is what it means to be human, to have the divine spirit in each of us.

Therefore, we are not to embrace New Age religion with its values of astrology, drug use, confused sexuality, and its obsession with youth and immortality. We are instead to cling to values like treating women right, freeing people from slavery (both physical and psychological), doing justice, loving mercy, and a humble life. We are to revere nature, and if temples close we should be all means hold our services in shrines and outdoor places. We ought to reject nonsense about dress codes, paid priests, and even temples. And so too ought we to reject worldly powers telling us how to worship. State and religion are separate for a reason. We have the right to worship by law. And we have a right to worship by God.

But nature is not its own end, but part of those things which are important to our growth. Family, nature, and love are each important as a foundation, but it is important to understand our traditions too and not embrace whatever is trendy and new. This does not mean we should condemn as hell-bound those who are gay or transgender (for I myself am transgender), but to recognize that if everyone did them, society would hit a dead end. Whenever possible, the continuation of human life is preferable to worrying about whether one is culturally sensitive to social fads. Nor is it rejecting fads alone, but allowing choices.

In some senses, this is an Old Age religion. It rejects superstition about fortunes or special herbs, it rejects materialism in favor of proper religion, and tries to return to the path of the root religions. For example, the first Christians did not have a hierarchical church until about the time of Constantine, the early Taoists believed in the Five Elements and folk religion, and the first Buddhists were wandering monks. Even the first Jews had no temple but rather wandered in tents with their God. Embrace personal religion, reject materialistic superstition.

AIKEN NO MICHU

The Price of Shame

When people talk about the price of shame, they typically mean the emotional cost of shame or something. But there is a literal price of shame.

Consider the common ambition to move away from one's parents because they are cramping your style, or because you look dorky still living with your parents at your age. To move away takes money. To find an apartment takes money, and the premium of your independence is much higher than simply living with the people who annoy you and working out how to resolve the situation. Then there is food, gas, and electricity, all of which must be paid in order to be relieved of the shame of being dependent. But are you still independent? Are you sure?!? Because it seems to me that you are now dependent on the money for gas, electricity, water, cable TV, and so on. All of this price is paid, yet still you are alone, because you are estranged from family.

This is not to say that some people might not enjoy living alone. There is something charming about a cabin in the woods. Yet if your only reason to buy the place is because you are ashamed not to be living in your own place *like other people*, the cost is too high.

And this is but one source of shame. Consider it far cheaper to learn to forgive yourself and accept who you are. Stop striving after a name or a title or a good reputation. These things don't matter, and will send you to an early grave. Likewise, do not envy those who have more gadgets or toys than you. Wouldn't it be better to use those as an excuse to invite with such people to spend more time with you? Mankind's deepest need is not hunger nor thirst, nor especially the acquiring of objects. It is to fill the void of loneliness. Do away with shame, and discover who you are, and what you really want.

No One Mourns The Wicked

To follow Aiken is to make your own decisions. To be driven by your morals and desires. Just as Elphaba in *Wicked* was actually a decent person, but the politics of the play were such that she was regarded as wicked, don't expect even your best friends to understand you. To be misunderstood, to be condemned by the people you thought were your friends, these things happen. What I would hope for though, would be friends or lovers that understand my values or have their own strong values. Not just a pretty face, but a heart and a soul.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Mirror of the Self

Most people wrongly understand the Golden Rule to be a simple moral law. You know, treat others as you would yourself, because it's the right thing to do. But this would be incorrect. No, not that it is not the right thing to do, but that the reason to follow this rule is completely different from what most people understand.

As you live, how you behave is reflected in those around you. Suppose you tax others and hoard wealth. Others likewise must take to stealing because there is no longer enough. You have stolen from others, therefore all steal. If others who work for you become accustomed to being accused by you, they will likewise refuse to be trustworthy. They will lie to keep from being punished. This is how your behavior towards others reflects back to how you will be treated.

This is not the whole story either. You treat others as you want to be treated implies that first you must be able to treat yourself well. If you cannot learn to love yourself, it is as though sleeping in a barn when others invite you into the house. Other people can't help you much if you insist on torturing yourself. On the other hand, one who manages to love who they are will find that many people love them back. They are easygoing, quick to forgive (because to truly love oneself means to understand their own flaws and accept them), and they accept help and affection. Love yourself, so you can love others.

But this works on a spiritual level as well, not only do you help yourself by helping others, but on some level, everything around you that you see or hear or feel is also part of you. The universe we see is a giant mirror that reflects everything we are. It only looks different because we have a distorted perception of who we are.

Perfectionism

On the topic of self, one of my greatest struggles, and I think the problem with "Christianity" as many people teach it, is the notion that "if you are a good person and do what is right, you will go to Heaven." To say nothing of this sounding like a ridiculously easy task, when in fact it is not possible to be perfect. This striving has more in common with Judaism and Islam than Christianity, Taoism, or Aiken. We don't want to be jihadists or Pharisees. We want to be humans.

I imagine many Christians teach it this way so that people will know firsthand that they cannot ever measure up to a perfect moral standard. But in the mean time, many followers wrongly stick to this cult of perfection. Even those that now know better like me, will still have to shut off those OCD tendencies. Strive for improvement, yet remember you are flawed. God designed you perfectly flawed so that you could connect with other people and share your life with them. Perfect people are like a jigsaw with no pieces to add.

AIKEN NO MICHU

A Reason to Live

Albert Camus argued that life is absurd. We are born without a purpose and that we can't make one. That plans fall through, that tragedy strikes, etc. He compared this to the Greek legend of the myth of Sisyphus, where a man is condemned to roll a boulder up a hill only for it to go back down to the bottom, having all plans thwarted. He said there are only three ways out of this absurd world: suicide (which sucks, because you are dead), transcendence (hoping for another world that is better than this one, but he dismissed that as useless against the problems of this world), and an absurd hero (he imagined Sisyphus smiling at his plight).

But Aiken has a fourth option. Rather than accept life as absurd and be an absurd hero who knows life is absurd yet tries to enjoy it anyway, rather than give up because there is no purpose to life and it sucks, rather than try to imagine an ideal world, they defy absurdism. Even if there is no point, they draft a their own purpose their own as a means to combat suicide. Their reason to keep going is to find a reason to keep going, then once they find that, to use that reason. If it is fulfilled or fails, you find another purpose. The point is to be real. To make your motivations real to you, and become real to others.

When I was a teenager, I was lost in the city on a field trip. I wandered lost and alone until I wanted to give up and crash into a wall. In that moment, my life kinda flashed by and I quickly organized a few things that I cared about enough to keep going. I thought of how my family would feel if I died, I thought of being able to explore the world, and how I'd never been in love yet. This is how I chose family, nature, and love as my core values. Years later, I was at a road trip and my car broke down. But my ideals kept me going, and eventually I was rescued. We need a reason to live. Even if our reason to live is to find a reason to live.

I do think that life is a bit like Amaterasu stuck inside her cave. She was the sun goddess so her very presence made crops live. She despaired of life, and people around her decided to throw a party, because their world could not exist without her.

When she asked what they were celebrating, she was shown a mirror. We need to look in the mirror and decide what means the world. If the world gets us down, rather than letting it defeat us, maybe see things as through a mirror dimly, as an echo of what matters.

AIKEN NO MICHU

On Wealth and Humility

We should not spend our life seeking after wealth, and that goes double for fame. We should regard wealth in fact like worthless paper. It used to be metal mined from the earth, such as gold or silver. This money supposedly had intrinsic value, that is, its worth came from itself. Then, it was backed currency, valuable because it could be redeemed for gold or silver. But the bank failed this promise, and now the money is fiat currency. Fiat means basically “because I said so,” so the money is only valuable in that people trust it. They believe in it. *Worship* it. At least United States currency tells us “In God We Trust.”

But even if the money were solid gold, ultimately these are just objects. You should not endeavor to be poor, but recognize the difference between wealth and *value*. We get glued to the idea of acquiring *things*. That latest iPhone, those nice paintings, the gold bars in some stockpile we value as though they are worth our attention. Suppose you are to collect comic books for instance. In a point in time where people read comics, to have comics in perfect condition meant you hoarding them, banking on the idea that some day they would be valuable. This means you were different from other people who actually read comics for enjoyment, in fact you probably never really read them much. On the other hand, after a major card or comic boom, having a bunch of people put their stuff in shrink wrap isn't nearly as valuable. In other words, it loses its value when people see it less as a sentimental object and more of a source of income. Most materials therefore do not have intrinsic worth at all. Even though they are rare, their actual value comes from our desire to hold on to them. Paradoxically, the only way to sell these things is to remove that desire, that sentimentality, but unless someone is equally passionate, there is no gain from such a sale. There may be only two copies of a book (like this one), but if nobody has heard of it, it isn't worth much.

Religion tells us that humans have intrinsic worth. That is to say that God values us as one would treat the rarest gem, or most valuable work of art. Humility, as my dad said once in a sermon, is not about groveling and scraping. It is about understanding our natural place. We are made in God's image. We are not animals, and not to be treated as beasts. We are humans, and that should be admired.

True wealth is not found in material goods. The meaning of the miracle of feeding 5000 people is that God grants us what we need to live. We have enough to eat and a roof over our head, all of these these are because we have friends and relatives. People that we can trust. God works through events and people to provide for our needs. At the risk of undermining this message, this is not to say we should believe looking for rewards. But rather, we know that what we need is covered.

AIKEN NO MICHII

Suppressed History

On one Youtube video called *Spirit Science: Human History Movie*, they proposed that back in ancient times that society was much more advanced than originally proposed. The video was a bit weird, mentioning alien invaders from Mars and things like the pyramids and the Sphinx being far older than originally thought. They discuss weird things like ley lines, and how many temples and monuments are built on these exact points.

There are also mentions in Hindu scripture about something called the *Brahmastra*, or Brahma weapon, described almost like a nuclear weapon. That is, ancient people possibly had a different sort of science than us, which explains many of the myths and legends, which maybe have looked more akin to magic. If the power of the mind is able to create new technology and the power of faith and positive thinking is able to sometimes make people beat incredible odds, then it is certainly possible for ancient people to have had some powers we don't know about. It's probably for the best that humans can not only use technology and not some sort of magic.

Interestingly, the Bible has Joseph dealing with a seven-year famine which came from the east, and there's mention around this time of the human lifespan suddenly shortening by an alarming degree. Also, in one ruins in India (I believe it was around Rajasthan) there was apparently a mass exodus from the city that was historically unexplained. There is apparently a sign saying, "Entering the borders of Bhargarh before sunrise and after sunset is strictly prohibited. Legal action would be taken against anybody who does not follow these instructions." These warnings would make perfect sense if it were an unsafe area, such as one filled with radiation.

Frankly, I am not sure that I believe some of these stories, but the point is that we have a great deal of lost history, and I do believe that on a basic level, our history has put forth a materialistic lie that conveniently ignores the fact that technology is not a straight line of progress, that things like cement and certain building techniques remain lost for centuries. Or that a spiritual reality has always existed behind the scenes. This is the purpose of religion, to reconnect us with our past, with our connection to God, and with each other.

The fact is, our knowledge is not certain. Whether we are parents, teachers, or religious or political leaders, we certainly cannot be sure of secondhand knowledge because we haven't verified it. But even we have learned something firsthand, how can we be sure that we are not mistaken? You need to test ideas to ensure they are actually real. Otherwise, you believe nonsense.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Calling not Career

We are called to work six days during the week and to rest and worship. And many of us see this as a sort of deal where we need to find a job, earn money, and do what we are good at or somehow we won't be proper humans.

Since we talked about money versus actual intrinsic worth earlier, let's discuss the difference between career and calling. All of us have something that we could be very monetarily successful at. People throw money at us to do this, because they see it as useful to society. We go from a part time schedule to full time, and sometimes beyond normal hours. There is a sense that for a career that even if one were not paid in regular hours, this is a job they would work on to fulfill their idea of what motivates their life. The career pays the bills and makes you fulfilled. Or does it? Sometimes, you get a mid-life crisis, and you realize that something is wrong. Or sometimes you give your life to those who don't appreciate you, and wind up fired, in debt, and alone. Despite everything, you realize that while something definitely is a good career, you need to follow your calling. And no, I'm not saying become a minister.

The difference between a calling and a career is that a career makes sense in your head. You have organizational skills, why not become a librarian? You have skills in media, why not be a newscaster? You have knowledge of the law, so maybe become a lawyer? A career may earn you fame. Prestige. Wealth. Sometimes even a significant other. But in terms of your heart, you have a nagging feeling something is missing.

Sometimes your calling is the same field but a different aspect of it. Sometimes it involves being an entrepreneur or freelancer. Sometimes you have a job, and a hobby, and the hobby is the one your heart longs for more. In any case, following your calling is what God calls you to do, hence the term. Start carving that clay dragon. Start working on that job as an editor. Maybe start being a writer of manuals and novels.

The difference between a calling and career boils down to an expression in Buddhism, "Before enlightenment, chop wood and carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood and carry water." These jobs might be almost identical, but the feeling is not. Your work doesn't necessarily make you financially fulfilled. It might not help you get that cool car or impressive lifestyle with classy people. But what you do gives you a purpose and you can see how what you do impacts those you work for.

A career is a paycheck. A calling is our higher work. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, visit the imprisoned and infirmed. This is what we are called to even if work isn't religious. To do justice and love mercy, and to be humble. To help people.

AIKEN NO MICHU

We Don't Need no Education

The reason people classically got an education was to learn marketable skills in order to get paid. This was a descendant of the apprenticeship system, which had potential workers learn trade skills in order to become professionals themselves.

However, Women's Studies is not a career skill, not unless you want to be a professional protester or a lawyer involved in politically correct policies. Nor is African Studies. Nor should people be learning about 72 genders. We shouldn't be using these to push the notion of gender theories. There are also people who make choices to pursue unconventional lifestyles. I don't have any problem with people making choices. I myself have taken to calling myself transgender or genderfluid. But the difference is that I don't excuse my actions by saying that I was born this way. I had a series of childhood events that made me curious and explore crossdressing.

The problem with all of this is that when people are indoctrinated with this bullshit, they develop screwed up relationships, a series of victimhood complexes, and an inability to focus and hold a job properly. Their heads are screwed up from higher education. Worse, they are fed nonsense about how the West caused the Crusades, how climate change is a proven fact despite years of failed predictions, and how science proves there is no God. Actually, real science shows an organized and planned universe, down to the last quark.

These screwy lessons do not simply make us fail to understand history or screw up our understanding in science. In some cases, they create biases, such as blaming people for a war they were a victim of, religious intolerance, or support of costly government controls.

Worse, typically in order to accept this glaring skewed logic, the overall quality of the education lowers. When people can't do logic, for example, they cannot program machines to use logic, so machines behave on SJW reasoning principles. If a bridge is built this way, or a stoplight, it will fail. When people are taught using dumbed-down principles, they can't do real math, and machines that are built to control and spy on the population begin to break down. The more tightly society tries to indoctrinate and control others, the more their control slips in the long run. This principle is part of the Mandate of Heaven. Oh sure, society can be controlled by "wizards" or a small technological elite, but such efforts break down eventually. Either the teachers become a problem, or gradually the elites lose their hold.

When knowledge is uncertain, and people can claim knowledge for their own political ends, more important than to be book smart (when books are written by people with their own agendas), is to be able to understand many different ideas, and to decide for oneself what seems to be right. To be indoctrinated is to trust blindly.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Evils of Technology

Technology isn't inherently evil. I'm not a Luddite, and I use a computer to type this book. I use the internet to research things too. But I understand what many people of my time fail to realize that progress and technology cannot be viewed as good for their own sake, and that any new advance must be carefully weighed against its own flaws.

Alexa researches answers to questions based on spoken commands, and is always waiting for a signal word, meaning it is always on and always listening. This makes it a surveillance device that people willingly install in their homes.

Or suppose you replace your old wood stove for an electric fireplace? Well, it would burn cleaner. But by doing this, you now have a fireplace that is worthless in a power outage.

Even clean sounding technology often has drawbacks. Wind energy chops up a record number of birds, and solar energy relies on sharp materials called graphene that kill fish if they make it to the waterways.

There have been a great number of changes over the last 150 years, but the shift away from independence and towards social reliance on a bigger state is troubling.

Proper Use of Technology

That said, there is a proper way to use technology. Provided one does weigh the pros and cons of a new technology before using it, there are plenty of things that have a good use.

Technology that allows someone to save money tends to be an okay use. For example, the wood stove above can save money on gas and electric heat. If it cooks, this also means for the price of matches you can eat well without raising an electricity bill.

Above all, it's important to remember that technology is simply a tool. Even those advances that I listed could be abused. You need to have the right mindset. You could abuse a wood stove by cutting down too many trees, leaving wreckage where once there was a forest. You could abuse a computer's record-keeping and research abilities to keep tabs on other people and control them. And as long as a computer uses electricity, it is still a trade-off of electricity used for anything it does. It's sometimes easier to write on pen and paper.

All technology has drawbacks, but we should regard it as a Taoist might. Does it hurt nature? Does it threaten human or animal life? What if everyone used it, rather than just those who can afford it (some technology works as long as it is a luxury)? Do the apparent advantages also function as built-in drawbacks? All of these should be looked at before supporting a technology, much less buying it to use.

AIKEN NO MICHİ

Deception vs Aggression

I would prefer to have a wild boar smash me directly than to die of a tick bite. An honest act of violence is easy to deal with; things like hysteria, trickery, or betrayal undermine my very sense of trust. If you cannot be sure if you have any friends, you are hurt on a very real level. You can't even make new friends because you are unsure if you failed or if they were just a crappy friend.

I would prefer for a gang of thugs to kill me, than I would to spend five or so years completely enamored with someone who didn't love me back. This is why I spend so much energy talking about things like politics, disease hysteria, and censorship. Human beings are supposed to trust in God or the spirits, and deal with threats like wolves or snakes directly. When you cannot see your foe, you are powerless to fight it.

Suffering and the Problem of Evil

Because of the open-ended nature of Aiken, there is a large amount of moral ambiguity around why things happen to people. Taoism says that people are good *and* evil, rather than merely good or evil. That is to say, I cannot simply say that I am good and you are bad. In this way, suffering is probably a natural effect of misguided actions and not a reflection on us as a whole. Buddhism says that such as thing as evil is contrary thinking because labeling people as such makes it possible to justify doing them harm. Having seen a number of moral hypocrites convinced of the justice of their actions, I'm inclined to agree. Christianity gives two models, one of punishment for sinful actions, another is shown in Job and some of the New Testament where God is said to test those who loves to help refine them and develop their character.

You can see my problem. Is my suffering happening because I am a bad person? Is it happening because I am a good person? Is there such a thing as a good or bad person? Because Aiken is a syncretic religion, I am afraid that I cannot be sure. Perhaps this is the answer. That because we cannot be sure, we cannot label others as evil, though we hope they also do the same. Maybe the only evil thing is labeling. And maybe hurting those who do nothing to others. As for suffering, I guess we need to suffer to give us purpose. Boredom itself is suffering.

Scout Law

The Boy Scouts have an entire system of how to live, from worship, to living outdoors, to overall manners. The only thing that resembles this offhand is Sharia. By contrast, most Christians visit one day a week, and some only visit on holidays. They think being Christian is about being a good person and they either basically have that covered. Instead of single day worship, you need to see your entire life like a Boy Scout supposedly sees being a Scout. Your purpose is 24/7 purpose, and everything you read or watch or do is part of that.

AIKEN NO MICHİ

The Unquiet City

Ah, the city! The lively hustle and bustle, the parties, the upbeat atmosphere.... What's that? Your children all have allergies to various foods? Your sisters all go to therapists? You seem to be overtired from working full-time? You never have time despite how much you make? And what happened to your religion? You used to go to the church or synagogue, but lately all you've been talking about is money! What's going on here?

Well ummm, I hate to tell you this, but the city has more than just bad air as pollution. It also has a spiritual pollution. I have encountered this in many people that I have met, and the result always seems the same. Even with my sister, who is more the type to go hiking and camping, seems different after living in cities for a few years.

It's like this. Human beings are vessels that the soul uses to visit the physical world. As such, they are most at home among other natural creations, such as birds, wolves, snakes, and so on. The closer humans are to the earth, the less nonsense they have to deal with about secondary dangers such as rent or taxes, the calmer they are over all. Human beings weren't made to sit in cubicles. They weren't made to figure out taxes. They weren't made to stare at screens. And they weren't made to negotiate a commute. They were made to hunt, farm, fish, hike, camp, and possibly play golf. Even skiing or snowboarding is fine. Urban people believe that the reason rural people believe in religion is because they are "less educated." This is not true. Plenty of people who went to college moved back home because they wanted to use their skills to help their towns.

Meanwhile, the cities are filled with so many emotionally disturbed people that they have a murder problem. They have more rape too. The process of urbanization comes with subverting the culture of a town, destroying its spirit.

But what's that you say? What about the parties and the night life? Small towns have state fairs. They have bars and pubs. They have shops too. But surrounded as you are by living things, you suddenly realize how much death is involved in clearing up land. And how much of what you had before is paved over.

A Worthless Book?

This book of religion you could probably find for \$6 in self-help section. While it has plenty of opinions on religion, that is all they are. This book is the second book of a series to teach on the Aiken faith, but like the *Mune Shinri*, it fails utterly. The other book was **my** *Mune Shinri* (heart truth), this is **my** *Aiken no Michi* (path of Aiken). This book can be burned or used as scrap paper. We should not be attached to "holy books," nor should we kill others over them.

AIKEN NO MICHII

Laws are not Always Just

Such a thing as absolute morality probably does not exist, but the reverse, a sort of moral relativism, would be entirely too wishy-washy. Instead, typically the morality of the world is a sort of consensus morality. That is not to say that because many people agree with the morality, that it is necessarily right, however.

Just because many people agree that something should be a law doesn't mean it should be. Consider the idea of leashing cats. Some people think that if cats wander off, they could run into traffic and get hurt. While that may be the case, the law has unforeseen side effects. If a cat is found without a leash, it can be taken to a shelter and put down. Unlike dogs, cats often do not wear their collars, so a wandering cat is indistinguishable from a stray under such laws.

Other laws have smuggled-in problems. Human beings are selfish creatures, and will try to promote the causes they want at all costs, regardless of how others feel. You see this all the time with laws claiming to be something like Defense of Small Kittens Act, while sneaking in several laws about prohibiting skateboarding. It seems like the people writing laws seriously are control freaks.

Even assuming the laws are not filled with tricky clauses, there is still the original premise. What if what is a consensus that everyone agrees is moral or at least morally allowable is actually highly objectionable? Years ago, slavery was not considered immoral, and in fact they argued it was actually protecting blacks since the plantation owners paid room and board (they were still not being paid though).

The bottom line to any written law is to have the people passing the law also have to follow it. If the tax allows those passing it to ignore how other people feel, it is unjust. For example, if a law completely shuts down businesses in the name of keeping people safe, the law ought to be abolished and the people passing it arrested.

Whenever possible, laws ought to be followed. But we ought to understand that the law is not higher than the very flawed humans who wrote them. These people's hearts were filled with greed and other desires. And sometimes one should accept the consequences of not following rules if mercy is at stake by following them.

When laws are too great, people have to struggle just for a loaf of bread. If poverty and desperation prevail, while crime should not be excuses, don't be surprised if this means that people are robbing or murdering others. Don't be surprised if there are con artists and prostitutes at every street corner. People do what they need to.

Neither does the state pretending to be exceedingly generous make a difference. If everyone lives on handouts, if nobody can make money from honest work, isn't this welfare just another form of chain?

AIKEN NO MICHU

Politicians Should not be Lawyers

It seems reasonable to assume that lawyers, having experience with writing legal forms and contracts, should also be involved in helping the country run by making its laws. Isn't this why they have all this experience? Unfortunately, in the process of prosecution or defense law, most of them learn how to be more than slightly slimy. A person with such tainted character is fit to run a country only through God's grace. The ability to write laws is something anyone can learn, given enough practice. But to write fair and kind laws is something that requires empathy. Lawyers are butchers that hack rather than slicing.

True, lawyers have experience writing jargon-coated contracts that are impossible to get out of. But such laws shouldn't exist anyway. A rule should include exceptions, allowing people in dire straits to have some relief. We need laws that understand the concept of mercy.

The people involved in upholding laws should not be involved in writing them for several reasons. First, there is a principle similar to making a game and then you also change the rules, someone will cry that the game is unfair. If you are in charge of enforcing the rules (by being a lawyer) and also writing them, you can make them to suit you.

Second, while it is true that lawyers are experts drafting laws, they should function as a politician's assistant not as politicians themselves. Why is this? Well, would you trust a baker to be able to bake bricks for a chimney? Or trust a hedge trimmer to cut hair? Or a butcher to do a surgery? Just because these things are related, it doesn't mean they can do the other job. Writing contracts for a person is different from drafting laws for an entire country. If you desire to be a career politician, you ought to start by serving. Learn as many jobs as possible, learn the skills and the experience of working those jobs. This in develops empathy for the plight of those in this field. An accountant will never understand how a struggling waitress feels. That said, while a politician could be a jack-of-all-trades, it would be far better to elect one who is an expert at the trade. A retired fisherman understands what sort of laws there should and shouldn't be with regard to fishing. When politicians don't understand regular people, we have laws telling computer technicians to get a private investigator's license.

But there is a third reason. There *shouldn't* be career politicians. The fundamental problem of having politics as a job is that it attracts the most power-hungry people. Our politicians should be drafted, either by lottery or some other method. They should not be running for office. Even the risk of drafting an idiot is better than that. It is said that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, but there were plenty of absolute monarchs who actually ruled justly. But there were very few who seized power that did so. Ambition corrupts, absolute ambition corrupts absolutely.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Against World Governments

Thomas Hobbes, when discussing the social contract, describes the government as a Leviathan, which as everyone who has played *Final Fantasy* knows, is an enormous sea dragon. Yet in Isaiah 27 of the Bible, it is mentioned in a prophecy of how God will rescue people from injustice, that God will slay the Leviathan. Again, in Revelation, the existence of government is compared to a Beast that will rule ten kingdoms. The United Nations has just such a plan, to divide the world into ten regions. It makes grand sounding statements, but the truth is many such big organizations scheme to control the size of the population, then control the population. Rousseau, contrary to Hobbes says “Man is born free, and is everywhere in chains.”

“Keep Calm and Obey,” the Leviathan says. That is, when it isn’t using its bought-and-paid-for priests to tell us why we should obey the state by misquoting Romans 13. We should not blindly accept the actions of our government but understand what this passage means.

No, you shouldn’t go out and riot. Nor should you violently overthrow things. The government is like a gambling hall, the house always wins. If we were to overthrow the government, some new ruler would take power. We are not at war with the governments of this world, our kingdom is the Afterlife, the world of our spirits and souls. Our duty, then, is only to oppose the effects of government to try to control the hearts and souls of others. Our kingdom is not of this world. We are to ignore the state, not to oppose it.

The reason for the passage of Romans 13 relates back to the concept of the government as tenants. He explains that there is a master (God) who builds a vineyard (the Earth) and appoints tenants (leaders) to watch over it while her is gone. These tenants kill the servants (followers of God) and eventually try to kill the master’s son (Jesus), hoping they will get his inheritance. As though inheritance would be granted by murder. The proper purpose of these tenants was to create the Law. The Law in turn shows us that we can never live up to it, and we seek something better. But it still applies.

We are not to react in violence to these people. Instead, we are to give people the one thing this Leviathan cannot withstand, the Truth. In Hebrew legend, the world *emeth* (truth) gives life to a golem, while removing one letter (*meth*, or dead) makes it inert again. Without the truth, all of us are doomed, body and spirit. If we believe in the secular world, we are kept in power of it. When we understand that death is an illusion, that this world is an illusion, and that we can be free from fear by knowing our soul is immortal, the tenants lose their vineyard. This is why they killed Jesus. But the days of these tenants are numbered.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Benevolent Rule

Many of those in government unfortunately subscribe to Hobbes and his beliefs that humans are inherently evil and need to be ruled. But humans are neither good nor evil, but a mix of both. And regardless of how they are, this is an excuse. Even if they *were* evil, this is no license to govern humans. It's irrelevant. If humans are good, then why rule them? And if they are evil, you had best worry about what will happen if your desire to rule them goes too far...

But humans are like porcupines and dogs. They are like dogs in that they are loyal and obedient when given praise and good food. But a dog that is kicked and mistreated will bite and claw at those who cross them until they are torn to shreds. Humans are like porcupines in that they wish to be close to other people, but cannot get too close.

Humans should not be ruled at all. But the world is intentionally designed as imperfect, so that our lives need God. A leader who understands that government is to serve people, not the other way around, will at least have the benefit of loyal subjects. They will be patriotic. Nationalistic. Proud of their country. A leader can do this simply by keeping taxes just high enough to collect from paychecks at percent. By staying away from unjust edicts like "right of first night," taxes that punish people for not being able to afford insurance, taxes that take land or other property if not paid, taxes on licensing to do a job, or regulations that are designed to target small businesses. Taxes should also not force people to do math, fill out forms, or save money. Tax from paychecks, and return the money when you are finished. Money is loaned to the government, not the other way around.

A government can become rich by treating its subjects well. Punish foreign lands for their unjust trade with robust tariffs. Reward allies that treat us well with low taxes. Do away with incentives for immigrants, treat citizens well. Encourage citizens to be generous by offering them tax breaks for donating to charity. Stop offering handouts, and ease regulations preventing people from hiring. Above all, make sure that everyone under you who wants a house is able to build one or buy one. Property taxes means they will have to live on your terms with more taxes and less freedom. Rain falls freely from the sky. Forbidding rainwater from being collected is to say that the government owns nature. But nobody owns nature but God.

But corrupt governments always look at the short term. 70% tax seems to pay more this year than 10% tax, so they want the most for this year. Or make so many restrictions that small business owners have to go on welfare, deciding that once they are on welfare, they will vote for big government. Only... next year those same people have no job. Only next year, those people are angry, and may even lead others against those in power. Sooner or later, this goes wrong.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Mandate of Heaven

So how does this go wrong? Well, Adam Smith explains principles of economics. Supply and demand means that dangerous jobs, or jobs that involve rare items, or jobs that have infrequently sold net more profit than those that anyone can do. In other words, economy and society are based around keeping customers happy (by giving them goods they actually want) and keeping employees happy (by rewarding them for hard work). When people work together, they should be compensated. Dictatorships usually fail on all counts. They force production of unwanted goods, they pay everyone the same meaning those who work harder or better aren't valued, and they regulate those that set up businesses until they are basically working for the government. But this is but a small part of a larger whole.

The larger picture is what is called the Mandate of Heaven. Think of it like this, human beings generate good and bad karma, before even talking about the theological difference between karma and sin. But the state also has a sort of karma. When it rules well, it can expect stability. A society where everyone earns from year to year, where people love the jobs they do and nobody has to worry about licenses for things they understand how to perform, where the average person has a house and a farm, where people go to festivals and enjoy life in their town, all of these things create a society that is patriotic.

If a government tries to abuse its citizens, robbers begin to rise up and form bands of thugs, natural disasters occur, revolts happen, and all sorts of other calamities. And then the state falls, and a new state has to figure out how to please people, or it becomes like the old state. And it had better keep itself from becoming like the previous state, or the same will happen. China saw this happening enough times that they invented the theory. This is because the theory works.

Idealism is Evil

This religious text deals to a great deal in personal faith. This implies that each person effectively is a religion-state microcosm. Each person has an idea of the perfect world. While this seems in line with my own ideals of personal faith, there is a problem. Idealism is the extreme ignorance that one's version of how the world ought to be could have any flaws. All of us have flaws, this is the point of being human. But humanity is most dangerous when people ignore the reality that their ideals aren't perfect. Even my "bonds and boundaries" mindset plays out very poorly if most people wind up alone.

Consider *The Sorcerer* in Gilbert & Sullivan. The two idealistic lovers think it a great idea for everyone to fall in love and spike a teapot with love potion. The problem is, they didn't ask anyone permission whether they wanted to share in this vision. Yet likewise, we cannot be indifferent to the evil caused by idealists. Help, yet do not harm.

AIKEN NO MICHII

Church and State

In America, we have separation of church and state. This is to prevent any one religion from asserting dominance over the lives of others. This allows people to have their own religious beliefs, and the government doesn't bother them. Unfortunately, some people interpret separation of church and state (which is a state that mostly allows freedom of religion) as separation of church *from* state. In other countries, such as Israel or India or Saudi Arabia, you have a theocracy. There is an official state religion, and at best you are expected to follow the religious laws (at least if you are an adherent) of the land. At worst, you might even be persecuted for having a different belief system. If you are lucky, your beliefs match those of the area you are born in. If not, you are an outcast. Honestly, I wouldn't mind living in a theocracy, but I would seriously prefer not to live in a government that was totally divorced from religion. Many people have a mistaken idea that if religion stayed out of government, everything would be happier. This is probably true only in reverse. You see, from a religious freedom standpoint, having government not enforce temple activities means more freedoms. But having a government with no morality (while atheism can in theory have morality, many of its heroes are nihilists like Nietzsche) as a result of being remote from religion may be antipathetic to it, and spend its time creating mischief. At this time of writing, all churches in many places, as well as many other temples and synagogues, are closed for the "safety" of all. A government ought to be tempered with moral laws, those that protect the rights of other people.

Another thing to note is that there is a mistaken impression that if government is not religious, then it will be more tolerant as a result of no axe to grind. This is nonsense. Government is a union of laws and people. People have their own opinions of what they think the world should look, whether they are atheist, theist, or something else. By making the laws, they in turn decide what sort of world to make. The problem is that atheism is not usually the lack of belief but an active disbelief of such things as gods. That is to say, atheism is a religion with dogmas of its own. And it shows, in the way laws are passed when most of those in power are secular. A government must therefore be neutral, in order to effectively allow for freedom of belief.

Most of the problems of government happen because the people involved are too ambitious, too greedy, and too grasping. Likewise, many churches are ruined because the bishops behave like politicians. The solution is to do away with bishops and to insist that political people behave more like priests. But that's unlikely to happen.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Wicked Tenants

Jesus tells a parable about wicked tenants. In the story, a master sets up a vineyard and hires tenants, expecting the tenants to yield good crops. Instead, they beat or kill the slaves who ask for the crops. These slaves represent the prophets who were killed in the past for sharing God's words. Then they send the master's son and they try to kill him to steal the inheritance. Jesus then asks the Pharisees what the master should do, and they tell the harshest punishment they can think of before they realize that Jesus is speaking about him. When they do, they plot to have him killed.

I recently heard a sermon that seemed to be telling the congregation that they are the wicked tenants and that social justice riff-raff would replace them. But after a day or so, I realized this profoundly missed the point. First of all, Jesus on the cross asked for forgiveness for the very people persecuting him. But second, this misses the actual point of Christianity.

"Christianity" teaches sacrifice as prime goal, pushing again and again the image of the cross. It is so much so, in fact, that when several Objectivist types like Ayn Rand and Terry Goodkind condemned altruism, they tended to point right at religions like Christianity as sources of altruistic teaching. But it is important to remember that Marxist ideologies, although using religion to push such teachings, often find that it is a major roadblock in their ability to function, and try to undermine it instead. How can this be? Well, it is perhaps because unlike loud claims that it wasn't real Marxism whenever it fails, the Christianity they pushed in truth wasn't real Christianity. While abstaining from violence, the real Jesus nonetheless defended the right to have "swords." While sacrificing his very life, no one would agree more with Ayn Rand about choices than Jesus. This was a man who they tried to make king and he refused. He was a man who cared about boundaries and personal freedom.

Christianity in fact is not about Afterlife as reward for sacrifice, but shows a parable of a master freely offering his reward to whoever he wants, not just the deserving. This was a God who freed the Jews from Egypt, who believes in freedom. It is not for us to sacrifice to parasites, but to understand that despite our failings, we are given life and freedom and an Afterlife.

Who then are the wicked tenants? Well, it is our leaders! Not a day goes by that some politician doesn't have some sex scandal or start a war, increasing poverty and injustice. And don't get me started on attempts to use technology to take over the lives of people, whether self-driving cars, allegedly "green" energy, or surveillance devices. If anyone deserves to have power taken from them, it is not those Christians who are flawed but doing the best they can in this world. It is the government leaders, business leaders, and yes, especially religious leaders. The Pharisees are alive and well. They are the bishops and other hierarchy that when people were isolated and unhappy during the "pandemic," told others they weren't being safe enough! Do regular people lay heavy burdens on others? Not nearly as heavy as the bishops (many of which are secular career politicians working to dismantle the church from within) lay on the church, yet they seldom pay for their actions. Lay Christians get blamed instead for the pedophiles or the people who "represent" Christian ideals.

AIKEN NO MICHİ

Shunning Extremes

While there is plenty of political commentary within this book, ultimately it was written in stages. That is to say, some of the pages were written earlier or later (not necessarily in order by chapter), when I was particularly hung up on the sad state of politics, or moody about a broken relationship, or whatever. We as humans are human, not some automaton kept from feeling angry or sad by some moral limits. To be human is to be at war with mood.

With all that said though, some things should probably be avoided. For example, I may vote if I want to, but sometimes it either doesn't make a difference or is actually unsafe, because voting the wrong way will get you killed. And rioting or burning cars because of some political ideal is just thuggery. If you can't distance yourself from getting caught up, or if it feels like a fraud anyway, perhaps you shouldn't vote. Sometimes there is virtue of not sinking to the level of extremists. As I speak, there's a commercial saying "Silence him," with regard to Trump. The thing is, extremists suppress free speech and silence people they don't like, because they don't have anything real to say. As much as I would like some liberals to shut the hell up, the fact is that a free society depends on free speech. To be extreme like your opponent is to be as bad as them. Don't silence anyone. Generally, doing nothing allows evil to happen, and doing too much often is evil. Thus we should avoid either extreme. Likewise, to be too emotional or too rational are unhealthy extremes. It isn't that we should try to be some perfectly balanced person but rather a hair-trigger temper or manic depression is just as terrible as being the sort of person that doesn't shed a tear when people die around them.

Spending too much or saving every penny, never going out or wasting all your money on travel, either way you can get stuck unable to even buy groceries. Being too shy or too outgoing, either way you could be unable to make friends. Never depending on anyone, means you sometimes get in trouble and have to have people bail you out, as surely as if you constantly depend on others.

The worst evil in this world is to be too nice, to be too concerned with virtue. When you become concerned about reputation, you are willing to kill others over dirty secrets. Wouldn't it be simpler to just stop being embarrassed? Accept yourself, and stop being afraid.

Gentleness of the Tao

The softest things in this world often last the longest. Think of a hard tree or a sturdy concrete wall. A tree can get knocked over by wind, which isn't even solid. The wall can be overcome by vines and water, as cracks form from water and ice, making more vines take over. The teeth will start to break down well before the tongue, and the tongue can push the teeth over. So why do so many embrace hardness?

AIKEN NO MICHU

Rejecting Great Honors

The Buddha could have been an actual prince, if he had done his duty in combat and had a child. Instead, he followed his conscience, walked off in order to study life, and wound up more or less penniless, as he meditated under a tree, before finally getting enlightened.

Confucius and Mencius both received many offers from rulers to have this or that state position, but for the most part they turned them all down to instead write about how a properly run government practices top-down filial piety. Mencius in particular was unpopular in this regard because he advocated that rulers also ought to respect their governed. But in either case, they were willing to offend many important people instead of simply accepting the honors.

Lao Tzu used to be an official, but eventually got so fed up that he left the country for parts unknown. And many of his successors also talk of stories of people rejecting political posts.

Why did all of these people turn down such prestigious posts? Wouldn't they have the money, fame, or other things they needed if they just went along with the program? Well, there's just one problem.

Sometimes great honors are actually a trap. If you become famous, you lose sight of who you are, and you are disgraced if you fail. You can expect no employment if enough people are convinced that it's your fault. And money represents a contract, where the worker is obligated to the whims of their employer. They cease to be able to make their own choices, for fear of displeasing their master.

This situation can get abusive and/or toxic very quickly, particularly in ancient China, where many of the kings were basically autocrats. Whenever a honor is granted to you, rather than accepting it blindly, you should consider if it is even what you want. If not, by all means, let it pass by.

Economy of Happiness

We usually think of life as a zero sum game. That this person makes \$100 from that sale, you get \$10 each from 10 customers. You might see it as unfair, and think that jobs should pay the same. Adam Smith disagreed. He saw supply and demand as a model. You have ten customers, while he gets \$100 less often. The same for high risk jobs paying more. In fact, in a perfect society, money would just cycle around, giving everyone what they need to meet their needs. We are all just borrowing money. There is no zero sum game, unless people hoard.

Similarly, some people think of happiness as a zero sum game. You're happy and I am not, therefore I want to take your happiness away. But no matter how many people you screw over, you will never feel less worthless. In fact, you might feel *more* so because of the lengths you went to in order to hurt others. But you can learn to be happy when life sucks. Life should not be a zero sum game.

AIKEN NO MICHU

The World as a Classroom

Everything that we see and experience in this life is a symbol. For example, you could find in a typical week that people are talking about how tall you are. At first, you might be proud of your height. But that same week, someone might mention gardening and how they need to cut back the daisies that stand up too much. Or we could read a book about an abusive relationship while an actual argument is going on with your family, and glean some insight about the argument.

Now, we might think that because our life taught us something, that our lessons in life are universal. But I cannot be sure that this is so. I may learn throughout my entire life that relationships are important, but also that ours can use or abuse us if they are given too much control of our life. I may not respect or like someone's mindset, but perhaps their life likewise led them to this conclusion. Because of this, I can't intervene. This doesn't mean I cannot protect my own way of life, however. A person's worldview ends with how they treat others.

We are put into this world to learn lessons, but interacting and dealing with other people. Our spirits live in the Afterlife, but it is a world of many moods and few experiences. What we take with us is more or less how things are in our Afterlife. We exist in this world to introduce ourselves to new things. Some of them may contradict things we have learned before. And some of them seem nonsensical until much later. In any case, we live, we die, and take our lessons with us to other lives perhaps. This world is a classroom meant to prepare us for real life. I'm not talking about adult life though. When we die is when we truly start living the life that God has intended for us.

We should not, therefore fear death or any threats of the mortal life. Rather we should focus on what we value most, and we should seek to learn and do as much as we can while this life lasts. Climb mountains, work many different jobs, pick up experiences both physical and spiritual. We do not know what comes next, but life will help us prepare. In a classroom, we can misbehave if we want, but it stifles our learning. This, and not any heavy-handed morality, is why we need to stay away from theft, murder, and other acts against others.

Much of what I write is depressive, but the point of this is not to focus only on struggles as a way of spiritual growth but to understand that humans should also have happiness. That we need to be part of the world and able to learn about ourselves, but also to not be afraid of the things of the physical world. All of this is temporary.

We do not have to suffer, we are able to make choices about how good or bad our lives are, but we live in this world in order to learn. So we should be observant, we should talk to people, we should read, we should watch movies, play games, enjoy nature. All of these are our teacher, and we are to be good students.

AIKEN NO MICHU

True Love and False

People love to misuse the word “love.” A gay couple getting to buy a wedding cake. Love wins! Is it? The man whose business it was to sell those cakes was told he either had to betray what he believed in or lose business. Meanwhile, those people could have gone to others who would grant their request much closer to their area, but they chose to go to another state from far away. When you force others to submit to your whims, when you put their life, their jobs, and their well-being at risk then you do not act on behalf of love.

Does this mean love never takes risks or pushes the envelope? Not at all. Someone should pave the way to be the first black or female doctor, or the first male beauty contestant. It is important to remember that love takes risks, accepts danger for the sake of others. “Love” puts others in danger. “Love” forces others to do thing, or else.

There are other sorts of false love. Infatuation, for instance. When you “love” someone and desire to own them. When you care not about their happiness but for them to be an object for you to seek. Or saying you “love” cookies or pizza or whatever, when in fact your love involves desire of things, not life. Or “love” which involves ultimately destroying what you claim to admire. It is easy to think kittens are cute and cuddly. It is quite another to have your kitten vaccinated past childhood (vaccines have side-effects the more often they are used), to have them implanted with microchips, or to claim that it is mercy to kill them when they are suffering. If you would love someone, bear with them in their suffering. Don’t sentence them to death for being old or sick. People and animals have the right to die when they wish, not when their “owners” wish. If you love someone, you do not own them. They are yours, only in the sense of being your loved one.

Lastly, love is not some all-take-and-no-give deal. When you overshare, and another person just says, “That’s nice,” and never opens up about what’s going on with them, this is not love. When you given unsolicited advice, this is being a busybody. When you expect others to take your advice, but don’t trust the advice of others who are older and have been where you were, this is not love either. Love does **not** mean never having to say you’re sorry. Love means having to say you’re sorry frequently, and hoping that this time you’ll be forgiven. Love means being a good friend, not a sex partner. If you dismiss the pain of others, you aren’t even a good friend, no matter how good the sex is. A good friend faces ordeals honestly, forgives people, makes mistakes and learns from them, leans on others and asks for help (as well as offering help in return).

AIKEN NO MICHU

Three Parts of Humanity

Human beings are made of three parts: Body, Spirit, and Soul. In Christianity, this is set up as Body, Soul, Spirit, with the spirit being the least attached to the physical world. But personally, this model doesn't really work.

For one thing, we have words like dispirited, when someone's mood is to such as depth that one is depressed and possibly likely to commit suicide. As such, in this model, the body is destructible and corruptible, the spirit is not destructible but is corruptible, and the soul is immortal and incorruptible. That is to say, nothing in this world can affect the soul, it is granted by God, and the image of the Holy Spirit. The spirit, on the other hand, is the personal spirit that we humans are allowed. And the body is a vessel for housing the spirit and the soul until death.

Now, the spirit has the ability to be in pain, like the body. It has the ability feel sadness, sorrow, fear, and anger. This is what we mean by the spirit being corruptible. The spirit also can either travel with the soul after death, remain by itself due to regret or unfinished business (what we call ghosts or "spirits"), or remain with the body (typically this happens for atheists or other secular types, or those attached to their selves). When we say that a person is saved, what we mean is that their body becomes one with their soul, and becomes an immortal divine body, unlike that of flesh and blood. This is the body granted us when we become eternally united to God.

The body looks like that we see in the mirror, the spirit is basically an astral copy of the body, and the soul is never seen with the eyes, but is depicted as a ball of sorts, much like the hitodama concept. That the soul is immortal is essential to remember. People will tell you things like losing your soul, that someone's soul is burning in hell, or soul-crushing work. Ignore those people. It is possible that the spirit could be destroyed, but not the soul. Particularly unsatisfying work or work that fills one with guilt can crush your spirit, but remember this. The soul is God's and God alone decides what happens to the soul. "But why then does God send us to Hell?" God doesn't. If we have a spirit and a soul, we can go to the Afterlife. The quality of the Afterlife depends on our spirit. If it is filled with fear and anger, the spirit will observe only disturbing images. If the soul is filled with love and peace, only good things will be seen.

Lastly, the body is a vessel. It is possible to make a new body (and even a new spirit, though most humans). It is wrongly called transmigration of the soul. The soul doesn't go into anything. The soul creates reality around itself.

AIKEN NO MICHU

The Afterlife

The Afterlife is not a simple matter of Heaven and Hell. In fact, it may surprise readers of the Bible to know that the word Hell is not a correct translation, that this word actually comes from Norse legend.

Those disputing this are quick to point out Lazarus and the rich man. But a careful look at this story shows they are not in Heaven or Hell, they are in Sheol (the Jewish afterlife). Just as we will call the God of the Jews and Christians as God, we will call this afterlife Afterlife. Anyway, it is important to note that while Lazarus and the rich man are separated, they are in the **same** room. The rich man can see father Abraham and even call out to him, and likewise Abraham can talk to him. That is, Afterlife is a single place, and it changes decided by our emotional outlook, or our sin, or whatever. In fact, most translations of the word as Hell are mistranslations. Hell is from Hel or Helheim, a Norse word. And this land is not hot at all, but very dark and shadowy. The interpretation of Hell as hot comes from Gehenna, a garbage dump outside Jerusalem where bodies were burned.

If I went around being scared of clowns all my life, and spent most of it trying to beat up people in clown costumes, then odds are very good that my Afterlife will consist of being chased around by clowns the entire time. It is not that God punishes us with Hell. We are punishing ourselves. We are punishing ourselves by a misguided view of sin, by the way we treat others, by the way we treat ourselves, and by the rules we follow that cause us stress and pain.

As I will mention later, I believe that both reincarnation and an afterlife are possible according to Aiken. Even the secular notion that you can simply die and have your soul remain tethered to your body is an option. Our beliefs determine our Afterlife, as do our emotions. In fact, this can be said to be the reason for Jesus. If you have sad or angry emotions, if Jesus were not there to save us, we could easily be in a Hell of our own making. But Jesus does exist.

I would claim that Heaven and Hell are a concept distinct from the Afterlife. But how can this be, you ask? Well, I am not certain of this, but I believe that Heaven and Hell are not so much places but circumstances. That is, if you are stuck inside a DMV and cannot leave, most people would say you are in Hell. If you are having the best date ever or something, you would think you are in Heaven. But there are two things to remember. First off, Heaven and Hell are coexistent with Earth, meaning it is a constant mix of the two. Second, Heaven and Hell are not merely bliss or torture but rather being connected or separated from the divine. While Heaven and Hell overlap with Earth, Hell is described as eternal separation from God.

So what about the whole idea of some final Judgement Day? That all of us will one day be called to account for our sins? I mean, if as Romans 8 says, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God," then how can Hell even exist? Well, let's discuss this within the next section. I'm not sure whether Christians will accept it though.

AIKEN NO MICHI

A Lake of Fire?

So, Judgement Day. We have a merciful and loving God, and then a creepy vision of the future where people are sentenced to be thrown into a lake of fire for turning away from God. So what exactly is happening here? How can a God who will never forsake us also be a God who will do this to us.

One response is to use this as “proof” that God cannot be trusted or cannot exist or that there is some sort of contradiction. I was stumped on this exact issue for several days before working through a solution.

First of all, it is not God punishing us here. God allows us the ability to make choices, and one of them is to rebel and remain in a state of sin and wickedness. This includes atheism, the notion that the spirit doesn’t go anywhere after we die and there is no afterlife. The problem with this is that it represents a decision. The atheist, therefore wants the body and spirit to stay in the grave, and once the body is gone, that pesky spirit doesn’t want to account for the fact that it was wrong, so it wants to be destroyed. So it is. But the soul is God’s.

Second, when we say a lake of fire, what do we mean? I’ve looked blacksmiths working and I’ve worked in the garden. When we have a ton of twigs and such that cannot be composted, we toss it into the fire. It burns to ash. The ash is mixed into the compost to make new soil. Likewise, a blacksmith burns up metal and then skims out the dross. The dross needs to find some use, but there is plenty of useful metal mixed in with the dross.

In the same way, even if the person encounters a lake of fire, God retains the soul, yet burns body and spirit together.

Studying Buddhism, I noticed a similar theme, comparing human existence to a flame. They believe in rebirth, not reincarnation, so your entire self is wiped every time you get things wrong. All that you were is burned up. When the person actually gets things right, the flame of rebirth is snuffed. The soul and spirit goes on to whatever Buddhists claim is the ultimate goal, nirvana or whatever, and the flame is snuffed. In other words, you stop *burning*. God does have mercy on us. He understands that some of us want things to end, and so our pasts are erased. But God also wants for all to be saved. To stop burning.

But I think we can and should ignore Revelation. I’ll talk about that idea later.

The Miroku

The Miroku is the new Buddha that is supposed to come during their end times to teach pure dharma. I do not believe that I fit these standards, but I’d say to reject the rules of the physical world. We do not kill others or harass them, because to do so is to interfere with their spiritual experiences on this Earth. But many things can be dismissed.

Do not worry about cutting your hair anymore, to do so is to be fixated on the body of the Buddha.

Ignore your hair and clothing. Do not worry about forbidden foods, you are more than flesh and blood. These things don’t matter. Seek enlightenment outside this world.

But you say, I am tempting you into unclean things. Nonsense. The fixation on such things is what is unclean. You should not care what you wear, what you eat, only on what comes after this life, and cultivating virtue.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Revelation

Is Revelation even true? A quick look through Revelation shows that it appears to fail on multiple levels against the scripture from Galatians 1:8. "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!" That is, even if the faithful religious tell us scripture, but it contradicts the Gospel, they are under a curse. So, is Revelation against the Gospel? Well, let's see. It depicts both a God and a Jesus that are unforgiving and almost monstrous. Compare this to Jesus in the New Testament, who preaches grace and forgiveness to sinners, and this doesn't match up. There is a distinct lack of grace throughout the entire book, and telling people that if they get a chip or tattoo or mark on their bodies, they can never enter God's kingdom. While I agree that such a thing probably will make you sick or even die, I think the author forgot that "nothing can separate us from the love of God." How then, can a human-made device do so?

I do know that there appears to be a legit Mark of the Beast. But having put up with the COVID thing, I'm starting to develop an alternate theory on all of this stuff. That is, each generation might have to put up with a particular Mark of the Beast. For the early 20th century, everyone needed to buy war bonds or they were viewed as unpatriotic. In Germany, if you didn't wear the Jewish star, you were in trouble. The point is not that these are a big deal or not a big deal, but that Christians should expect persecution, and make choices based on not belonging to the oppressing group. Currently, we have crap like people being denied a heart transplant because they are unvaccinated. This is human evil on a great scale, and no this is definitely not okay. But this Revelation Jesus is not like the Gospel Jesus, who said "forgive them, for they know not what they do." We are told the the kings of this Earth lord over others but it is not to be this way with Christ's disciples. Jesus is able to forgive the adulteress who had stones to be thrown at her, yet the Whore of Babylon is to be tossed into a pit of fire. What are we to make of this?

Well, given that his statement that whoever leaves anything out or adds anything, is remarkably similar to the claim made by Muslims that their book is infallible. This is a red flag here. The only meaning that works then, is that there is an essential prophecy for believers which is true, but John distorts it with his own interpretation. The essential prophecy is that the believers of God and the secular world will become increasingly at odds with each other, until perhaps this world will be destroyed. There will always be some persecution, until God makes things right. But this is a sick wet dream of punishing others who do not think as you do.

As Christians, we are called to be an example to the world, not a mirror image of its unholiness. This means in some cases refusing to swallow the Cool-Aid of the age. But it doesn't mean believing in a gospel of works, a lake of fire, or a New Earth that strips humans of free will and the ability to have sex or eat meat or go to the ocean. This New Earth will not have suffering. But it must have choices, and the ability for humans to be happy. Not condemnation for being not exactly like some guy in Patmos wants.

God has told us that "all have failed, all have fallen short." If this is so, then God's plan for a New Earth is real, as prophesied, but it cannot be a place where only the perfect enter. If that is the case, none of us are worthy to be in there. That can't be God's plan!

AIKEN NO MICHU

Sin vs Karma

Karma is a record of good or bad deeds. That is, the following of laws or disobeying them generates positive or negative energy that affects the spirit. While it is important to as a general rule to develop a strong positive outlook, and to have people not trapped in self-destructive patterns, this is not what sin is.

Sin is defined in a number of unclear ways. Some people do confuse it for karma, and go around with a wrong idea that God keeps some sort of record sheet. That you can do enough good deeds to get into Heaven, or eating pork on a Saturday will get you tossed straight into Hell. Not only do I reject the notion of a divided Heaven and Hell, but this is a complete misrepresentation of what sin is. Sin is missing the mark, and sin is separation. Sin is missing the mark, because many people fire at the mark of keeping laws. Did I wear this or that clothing? Did I pray enough times? Did I wash my hands before eating? All of these are laws of mankind, not of God. There is no forbidden food, no unclean locations, and none of that sort of stuff matters. What does matter is our separation. In fact, focusing on avoiding shame is far more evil than just admitting that you wore blackface in college, that you like frilly dresses, or that you're into feet. How many people have to die to hide embarrassing secrets? How many people have to suffer?

"When two or three are gathered together, I will be in their midst." Our worship is intended to be social, not distant. Not dry reading of text, but hugging and kissing others, sharing in food and wine, singing and playing music. Our worship is not about sitting in temples. It is about hiking together. Camping out with family. Playing *Magic the Gathering* or poker or bridge. Two lovers walking together on the beach, holding hands and talking. Even walking your dog in the park, or playing video games together. It is not good for us to be alone.

Now, there is a place for karma. We should understand that bad actions hurt us and others. That drinking yourself into a stupor hurts body and spirit. That we need to understand karma to escape unhealthy patterns of living. But what is far more important is to understand that following laws and being righteous enough is impossible. You will never pray enough, you will never be good enough. But it's okay.

The Yin and Yang of the Tao teach complementary opposites. Like understanding that happy experiences bring joy, and unhappy ones develop character, we likewise regard people not as good or evil, but as good *and* evil, that they are flawed and capable of change. The only real flaw is to believe in the screwy notion of others being set in stone. People who judge themselves as evil, who hurt others because they are convinced everyone hates them anyway, or people who are so conceited that they are convinced they are good despite all evidence to the contrary. We must regard ourselves as having sin but being forgiven. This is the way to find balance and harmony in our lives.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Understanding Sin

The Bible uses two terms: sin and abomination. Sin is something which separates one (from God and/or other people). An abomination is also a sin, but not all sin is abomination. Literally, abomination means that "God hates" the sin. These are things like crossdressing, homosexuality (particularly the receptive position), eating old meat, eating shellfish or insects, having sex with women during their period, offering children to Molech (which involved burning them), and having to do with foreign gods or marrying people who worship them.

So what, do one abomination one time in college, and you're damned for life? Well, no. The key part of this is why God hates them. For example, many crossdressers are deeply insecure about their bodies being male, to such a point where they later want to go under the knife. Most of these things on the list either are degrading the Jewish identity, degrading the human identity (such as eating bad food), or degrading the sexual identity. That is, God hates it *because* it makes you *hate yourself*.

The most important thing to remember about sin is that it separates other from others, and in the case of abominations, it makes us hate ourselves; God wants us to love ourselves and be joined with others. Remember, "all have sinned, all have fallen short" and "neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

That said, we must understand that sin is sin. Part of the problem of sin is either trying to deny that it is sin, or scrupulously trying to avoid all sin. Both of these approaches are pitfalls. We are not supposed to deny we have sin, or we engage in self-deception. But rather we are to understand that what we have sin, and to confess it to God. On the other hand, what is wrong with trying to avoid sin? Well, to put it bluntly, it's self-righteousness. The Pharisees tried to live according to the letter of the law. Not only is it an exercise in futility since you can never measure up, not only did it make them hypocrites who neglected the orphans and widows, but the purpose of the law is to show us why we need Jesus. Also, please don't burn children.

The point of sin is not to dwell on fault or blame, but to confess sins to God. This is confession is actually about sharing what is going on in our life. It is not merely prayers that God wants but for us to talk about what is bothering us. When we confess to our friends, we confess to God (sorta).

When we sing with others, we are singing in God's attendance. "When two or three are gathered together," he is in the midst of them. I do not accept the Catholic tradition of confession to a priest, this is venerating holy people. But all of us are part of the Body of Christ. Confess to God in prayer and confess to Jesus, yet also tell your friends what's going on in your life. The only difference is that God probably won't be tired of our complaining, while our friends might. Humans will always fail and fall short, but they are friends in a time of need.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Life and Death as a Cycle

Aiken is syncretic. This means it is consistent with the beliefs of several faiths. And yes, Christianity rejects syncretism, but I don't mind. Regardless of what others tell you is the right or wrong, you must decide whether this is truth or not. And I cannot imagine that God would pick only one faith after inspiring many others. Yes, there are man-made religions, there are false beliefs. But I believe some teachings seem right, while others are not. We must decide our faith.

Among these beliefs are the beliefs of Taoism. Taoism's beliefs about the afterlife are extremely unclear, but the overall message is light and darkness as complementary opposites. But doesn't this oppose the idea of Christianity is about good and evil? No, because what is actually evil is separation. Think of the 2016 election. Who was evil? Neither. Evil was in the hatred of both sides, the desire to cheat, the desire to hurt others. God is One, so the idea of separation itself is sinful. It misses the mark.

Taoism and Buddhism believes in a cycle of death and life. In other words, this life and our deaths are illusions. They are part of a cycle of rebirth. Immortality, and by that I mean real immortality (not the false one the mortal world offers with medicine), is the understanding that this world behaves as separated despite the reality that we are still in God's presence. That we even are alive is a sin, and thus we must die. But God grants us grace, and we live again.

Not a House, But a Tent

God didn't ask for a house to be built for him. He didn't think that temples were a good idea. David and Solomon insisted. God was touched by their hearts, and granted his request. But this was a mistake.

These priests should be thought of as merely servants, who give back their talents to help others. If they are anything besides, they risk being like the media, telling people what they ought to believe. Likewise, the temple should be seen as a shelter. We don't know what events will change. And to fill the temple with stained glass and fine objects is to make it an idol. God asks us to travel with him, to bring him with us, not to try to keep God locked in one place. Do not bury God's treasure in the ground, and give it back.

If priests fail you, worship with your family and friends. If even your family turns against God, worship alone. Travel from place to place, seeking to see God. This is not to say temples are evil. But if all the purpose of a temple is turned inward, if the people there only see God as present in church on Sunday, we have missed the point. God is there today in the people we meet, God is there with us at the DMV on our worst day. He is the lady next to us with a child. God is with us at a truck stop, when we have broken down our car. God travels with us.

AIKEN NO MICHİ

On Reincarnation

We are born to learn the lessons of our lives, and I concede that it is possible that it takes us several lifetimes to do so. I tend to believe in Buddhist rebirth (which emphasizes that we come back as new beings with our old selves largely gone) over Hindu reincarnation (which emphasizes past lives and memories of previous bodies). The reason for this is that it works better with the above belief on Hell and the lake of fire. But I also believe that it is possible to live and die within a single incarnation, and to learn everything we need within that life.

However, I do not believe that human beings come back as animals. This seems like superstitious nonsense, and completely misses the point of this exercise. The point of being reborn in this lifetime is to experience dualistic reality. However, animals are widely regarded as not having Knowledge of Good and Evil, or a conventional human spirit. That is to say, their main purpose is not to learn meaning in this life, to grow spiritually, or even to learn about morality. Rather, they are companions in this life. They die and become our spiritual companions, so it is our responsibility to treat them well and give them love. This not only affects our karma, but our quality of life.

Do Not Rejoice at Misfortune

It is tempting to see a person as evil, because they do not share our views, obey our rules of life, or do as we do. I can't speak for you or them. But the point is, we do not have a monopoly on being a "good person" so the idea of punishing others is wrong. Do not forget this, as it is easy to forget. When bad things happen to "bad people" we cheer and congratulate each other, and we use lofty words like justice. When bad things happen to "good people" we bemoan the fact, asking why this happens. It happened because you weren't the good person you thought you were. Sometimes it happens because God is trying to get us to learn and grow. Still other times it happens because of other "good people."

We may in fact pray that those who wish us harm will fail. That their schemes backfire and hurt them instead. We may pray that those who would do us harm may suffer. But let us draw a line at cruelty. Those who wish us harm for saying certain things or being a certain way, are surely cruel. But it is not kind or just to wish any lasting harm on others. If a person should hurt us, we are to remember they are a person, and to forgive them. Even if they have somehow given up their humanity, and now do monstrous and brutal things, remember this phrase. "I won't envy your suffering." The worst person around having stopped being human also gives up the joys and pleasures of this. They may appear outwardly successful, but God will judge them nonetheless. Let it not be said of you also. Do not sink to their level.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Aiken View of Jesus

Unlike many religions, Aiken does not reject Jesus. They are a syncretic faith heavily based on Buddhism, Shintoism, Taoism, and Christianity with some other ideas mixed in. So they have no problem accepting Jesus as their Savior (but Aiken's beliefs vary from person to person), accepting Jesus died on the cross, or that he was the Messiah.

The difference between conventional Christianity and Aiken are a few. Aiken accepts the cross as atonement for sins, yet is wary of idols. To see the cross as a focus for one's faith would be wrong. Rather, we much understand that the point of what Jesus taught was that God is with us, that we are to build a personal relationship with God through Christ. We are also to regard Jesus as having already returned, and not await a Second Coming. Jesus even now is within us, speaks through us, and acts through us. This is to say that Aiken accepts the real reason Jesus died on the cross was not to forgive sins (though this is also true) but because humans also live and die, this made Jesus part of the fabric of humanity. The focus of Aiken therefore is to understand Jesus as our dearest friend. To see Jesus through our loved ones, whether they are online friends, people we know at church, people we meet at a library or coffee shop, or even our own family.

It is important to remember that Taoism is also a part of this thinking. Despite us being able to see the best of humanity, the Body of Christ, we can also see the absolute worst. Isolation, rejection, and destructive impulses are also humanity. We need to understand that humans are by nature flawed, and models attempting to define humans as basically good or basically evil are fundamentally wrong. Human beings are good *and* evil.

The Soup Kitchen

I've been explaining the idea of sin and evil as separation. Here's what I mean. Suppose that a person tries to run a soup kitchen. However, they have no money, and don't intend to also run a restaurant so they take out subsidies or loans from the government. This now means the taxpayer is accountable for their venture, which will eventually fail because, again, they have no income. They are all give and no take, and thus separated from the law of Golden Rule. Those people dependent on them will be helped only temporarily. This is evil.

Likewise, the government who loans only using other people's money, who will eventually own their place and either continue to fund it from other people's money, raising the taxes in the area, or sell it and leave all of these people desperate are evil. They are all take and no give. The only decent thing would be to have a real restaurant owner run a soup kitchen in back using their own money. Sin is separation.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Three Realms of Buddhism

Technically, there are bunch more realms than just three. Typically, the minimum number is something like ten or so, but for the purposes of this discussion, there are three main realms described in Buddhism. These also correspond to Body, Spirit, and Soul as well as the reality described in Plato's Cave (the world inside the cave, the world outside the cave, and the world that the world outside that cave is base upon).

The Buddhists believe in the Desire Real, the Form Realm, and the Formless Realm. That is to say, the Desire Realm is the "real world" or the world of illusions and false perceptions created by our fears and desires. The Form Realm is the realm of the spirit, what most of us call the Afterlife. And the Formless Realm is the world as God or a pure soul would see it, the world of the underpinnings of reality.

Six Paths of Buddhism

The Desire Realm described above is further categorized into six paths. This is *samsara* or *rinne* (hence my middle name), the wheel of reincarnation and rebirth. These are: Niraya (Buddhist Hell, which is to say the state of being spiritually stuck), Hungry Ghost (unable to satisfy one's desires), Animal (unable to see beyond the physical world), Ashura (one who is wealthy and powerful, but always compares themselves to others), Deva (one who has a carefree life, however they usually exhaust their karma), and Human (a person who has a mix of experiences, and is able to reach enlightenment).

Note that in Buddhism, we are not so much reborn into different forms and into different patterns of lives. That is, an Ashura is typically not an actual demon but a wealthy and powerful person who is unhappy. Their fate is to compare themselves to others. It also believe people can learn and change their destiny. Doing so takes work, though.

Buddhas and Bodhisattva

An important way to understand Buddhism is there are essentially two paths. Ideally, you may either figure out what the cause of suffering in your life is and try to stop it from continuing or you help others do this themselves. The first is the path of the Buddha, the second is the path of the Bodhisattva. These paths were part of two Buddhist sects: Mahayana and Theravada.

But my belief is that there is no denominational separation on this point. Instead, you choose the life you want to live. You can become a Buddha and be liberated from the destructive patterns that keep plaguing your existence. You can become a Bodhisattva and try to help others resolve their lives. You can even become something else like a demon or animal or whatever. The important part is that you choose.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Faith is Faithfulness

Many of those who worship wrongly understand faith as doctrinal belief. That is to say, their denomination teaches Jesus died on the cross, Muhammad was visited by an angel, or that spirits or fairies are hiding everywhere and nourishing the natural world. These are doctrines. Many people believe in them, yet their prayers are not answered. Why not? Because this is not faith.

Faith comes from the same the same word root *fides* as fidelity, confidence, and fealty. In fact, it is better to say that faith is the ability to stand by someone even when times are bad. It also relates to words like verity, or truthfulness. One who has faith is loyal and honest.

Faith is not belief in teachings, but a belief in the core of one's religion. For Judaism and Christianity, it is a relationship with God (through Jesus, in the latter case). This is not just "I believe that there is a God," accepting the doctrines, but "I believe in God." You know God personally in your life, you trust even bad times.

Faith is hard. God will test our faith, and many times we will fail. In fact, many times we would prefer to curse God for visiting misfortune on us. God wants us to develop, and this requires hard times. But our faith gives us strength, as does love.

As far as belief goes, it doesn't matter. I could believe in giant purple space monkeys. I could believe in ancient aliens. Most beliefs will get us to a certain point. If a belief is false, sooner or later it will fail us, and we will have to abandon it. For example, if I were to believe gravity isn't real, jumping off a cliff might be problematic. Faith is not to say stubbornness. When our beliefs don't work we adjust them. But this is also why atheism doesn't work. At some point, there is a gap where the things like physics can't explain, because physical laws are needed to account for the creation of the universe, which necessarily requires a being or presence outside the universe. It's the problem of a canoe being built without a carpenter. A machine (natural laws) could do it too, but at some point someone would need to build that. This belief must be adjusted.

Faith is not about beliefs which come, are amended, or go. Rather, it is about our loyalty to the object of our beliefs. Even when we have every reason to say some choice words to God, to never leave his side, even if we wind up in a wrestling match with him. Because we are God's intended. We are God's bride. Yes, even if we are male. It is for this reason that we must not begrudge those who desire to wear women's clothing as men. They are perverts, yes, but we are souls. God regards us as souls destined to be married to him. So our physical bodies don't matter. They are simply vessels to be discarded.

AIKEN NO MICHI

The Triune Drama

This is not a substitute for the Trinity. I also believe in the Christian Trinity (and I know about the Hindu Trinity), but having been exposed to popular culture, I have looked at the repeated image of Legend of Zelda. In it, the archetype is a repeated Hero, Princess, Monster archetype. Or rather, Hero, Lover, and Villain. The interesting part about this was that the more that I read the manga and played the games, the more that I realized this rebirth cycle is sort of a fragmented soul. All of us have our selves, our friends, and our enemies. But when we get right down to it, it is our struggle make sense of our life.

Under a Delusion

Whenever I talk to people about things, I feel like I'm speaking to a brick wall. This is because other people have their own preconceptions or filters on how they see reality. They assume what I will say, and therefore tune everything I say out. They assume that because I talk about Christianity, that I mean this, that, and that. The Bible says that the nonbelievers will be "under a great delusion." While I am a syncretic believer rather than a straight-up Christian, I know all too well what this means. I have seen people who were sorta agnostic become increasingly hardened against religion and increasingly secular lately. It felt like they were possessed or something, because they weren't acting like themselves. I tried to point out even with social or political events, "Doesn't this seem weird?" and they didn't notice. I literally sound crazy when I write or talk.

People who have filters will not notice things that don't add up. I'm not just talking about conversations either. They seem to behave like they put my online posts on ignore even when they don't know me. They don't get exposed to anything that would confront their ideas, not just from me, but from the news, art, or other media they encounter.

A Real Boy

Speaking of media, two particularly inspiring fables are *Sleeping Beauty* and *Pinocchio*. They both are basically the same story. In *Sleeping Beauty*, a girl is asleep and is trying to wake up. A wooden doll is becoming a real boy. These are stories of people trapped in this unreal dream who are trying to become real.

We also are sleeping and/or wooden people trying to wake up and become real. We are not merely trying to choose a path of life. We are trying to become authentic. To become suited for real life. So many of us go through the motions and just get a job to make money, waste their life going through the same routine as other people. They aren't individuals. They're just windup dolls or something. It is important to become real.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Religion versus Delusion

Despite secular types telling us constantly of how religion is a delusion, professional therapists are very hesitant to make that comparison. Why not? Well... an actual delusion is a prevailing flawed belief that is inherently false. For example, being transgender because you think you're a woman is a delusion, but because you dislike being male is not. This is because one is a lie, while another is a desire. The disconnect between delusion and reality hurts the ability of both to function. Fatigue, depression, and moodiness are all symptoms.

However, not only can religion be neither proven or disproved but it tends to have a calming effect on the self, particularly when religious people meet in groups. The brain is adapted to seeing patterns, so by logical extension, the brain is geared toward belief, and the sense that life has purpose. On the other hand, many skeptics seem less well-adjusted than their religious counterparts.

Imaginary Friend

One of the accusations atheists make against God is that he is the effective equivalent of an imaginary friend. In other words, extending the idea that God is spirit to its logical conclusion, they say that because he cannot be seen or heard, this means God does not exist. But God is not spirit, or not *only* spirit. Rather God is existence. Every person who you meet can be worshiped as a manifestation of God. Every rock or tree, and even the seeming emptiness of the air is God. The air cannot be seen, yet it blows down trees and sometimes even rocks. Yet you don't need to look for examples of unseen power. You can see God through a beautiful woman who helps you through a time of loneliness. Atheists are the ones with an imaginary friend. For they believe that somehow chaos made everything they see.

Feeding Tiamat

Many idealist types think that everything would be great if big cities were all like San Francisco, with all sorts of minorities living together in the same areas. However, with regard to that, I have anecdotal evidence to the contrary.

I have two nephews from my brother who hate each other. The reason is simple. As an only child, the oldest didn't have any boundaries or expectations, which is fine if they gave him plenty of attention, but once the youngest came along, he got all the attention. The oldest came away with the mindset that he wanted to get rid of his younger brother. He suggested selling his brother rather than... the other option, but still it was enough to concern me.

I'm not going to judge them as bad parents, but I do believe that this situation is a mess. Since these children both needed attention, we tried to get them to separate, since they had a tendency to be forced together by their parents while giving all attention to one child. This meant that one child or the other would become jealous, and screaming would start. Instead, we moved each child to a separate part of the house, and had to watch the other one. This actually worked. The younger kid played, the older one actually learned to do homework. It was quiet and peaceful. I won't pretend this will work long-term or that I know everything about parenting. At some point, these two will have to come to terms with each other. But right now, when they are shoved together, they basically are grabbing each others' heels.

Whether running a big city or raising children, behave as if feeding Tiamat. A three-headed dragon each has mouths competing for food. If you give them food from one bowl, they will nip at each other. If you give each separate containers, this happens less often. Don't treat everyone the same. Figure out what they want, and give them that.

AIKEN NO MICHII

Sorcery and the Problem of Illusion

While faith concerns things like asking for plants to grow, hotter or colder weather, healing people, and protecting others, this isn't the only thing around there. Strictly speaking, I believe in three specific forms of power: faith, that is the requesting of outside forces like God to perform actions; magic, that is the belief in oneself; witchcraft, or the belief in sacred or magical objects; and sorcery. But magic is evil, you say. No, strictly speaking, magic is identical to prayer to God, except you believe in personal power. This does, however, have a rather serious drawback, because you are using your body not as conduit of God's power, but as a temple to perform rites on its own. In other words, you could with strong spiritual presence also perform healing, as do *reiki* practitioners. You see similar effects with such things as dowsing as well. These are basically all fine except for the key drawback of magic. When you use your own body and spirit, rather than calling on God, you exhaust your own body. Then there's of course witchcraft, which I scoff at because it's essentially idolatry. True power either comes from prayer and meditation or from developing internal spiritual energy, not from dancing around circles and carving on things.

Sorcery is different. It is often called the "power of positive thinking" (I've discussed this in the Positivity and Negativity section elsewhere) and a great many people swear by its effects. Like most things, it can be well used to cheer people up and to invite good outcomes, or to balance out stagnant outcomes and create change.

But there is one issue with this. It could also be called Onmyodo, for its ability to invite positive and negative outcomes (after the Chinese Taoist discipline practiced by the Onmyoji). But the secular world also uses this. Poorly. They create illusions, things like psy-ops in order to cause fear to others. To manipulate and oppress.

There are two dangers of sorcery. The first is the risk of wicked people doing exactly this, making a sort of paved-over reality where people are constantly confused and afraid. The second is having a poor understanding of self, reality, and a bad grasp on one's emotions. If these are lacking, the power of reality instead traps the user in delusions. In order to properly use the "power of positive thinking" it is important to understand that using this does not make us superhuman, that reality is not only positive but also negative, and above all the ability to calm one's emotions and dispense with illusion. Without this, such a power is one that humans shouldn't use, as surely as they shouldn't be used against the hearts and minds of people.

AIKEN NO MICHII

The Tao and the Nature of God

The nature of God is something that is often confused. We typically view God as some old man who hands down edicts from above. With such a horrible notion of God, no wonder we reject him. In this day and age, most of us don't really care to be dominated, not unless we have terrible sense of self-worth. But God is not like this.

First of all, we are told by the Jews that "God is One." Yet a further look at this in Isaiah 45:7 shows "I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things." It is more helpful to think of God in terms of the Tao, both in charge of everything good that happens and everything bad. The difference is that the Tao is more like a law, and God is actually more like a person. The notion of Satan is what we use to explain evil without blaming God. But the truth is, evil is also part of God's plan. We need evil to learn and grow, and to have something to challenge us and stand against us. There is an actual Satan, but he is an Accuser, and his existence is part of a whole that results from our knowledge of Good and Evil. That is, Satan is like other angels, he brings a message. It is simply that his message is that we suck, and need to do things to improve ourselves. The New Testament interpretation has him rebelling, and using his gifts to tempt others, but I think it is important to remember this concept.

Good Enough

In order to bring our lives back into balance, back in harmony with the Tao, we must understand how we are. Much of our understanding as Christians has been lost by crappy priests that subvert the actual message of Christianity. Many would-be Christians lose their way trying to be good enough to get into Heaven. What is "good enough"? How much would you have to do to be good enough to earn your reward? How many lifetimes does it take for a Buddhist or Hindu to stop being reborn? How many alms does it require a Muslim to be enough? They can't tell you. Christians who know their theology can though, they will tell you that it isn't enough. None of us are ever "good enough." We're not meant to be perfect. We are creatures of good and evil, and the fact that we are alive in this world at all is a sin. The sin is a separation of the unity of God's reality into a dualistic mindset. We will never be good enough. But that's fine.

God doesn't *want* us to be good enough. God wants us to understand that we are flawed creatures. That we need God, that we need this relationship. The laws are there so we understand how we have fallen short, how we have failed. We confess our sins to remember that we are not good enough, yet God gives us grace.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Disputing Fatalism

Fatalism is like seeing the world as one set path where there is only one right action. But there is always the problem of excusing one's own actions that caused the issue. That is to say, the word "fate" is tossed by slackers and evildoers. Slackers say that it's their fate that they do not have a job, that everyone rejects them or some such or they were unlucky. Evildoers excuse their actions against other people by saying that circumstances led to their violent actions. If everything is just luck, then there is no point to anything. Life is about choices.

I believe in destiny. I do not believe in fate. What is the difference? Well, if fate would be defined as events that are set in stone that cannot be changed, I wholeheartedly disagree with that. Even a rigged election can be overturned, if those in power genuinely wish to dispute the results. Destiny is not fate. Think of it as a sum total of all previous decisions. For example, if I bought an art book, I talk to a girl who likes art, I leave a pair of scissors in a nearby desk, and I don't put away wrapping paper, all of this allows for an event where I am in a position to give an art book as a present to a friend. The difference between this and fate is that I completely have a choice in the matter.

While we are on this Earth to learn lessons and develop and grow spiritually, there are plenty of heavy-handed "teachers" who will believe that they understand what path other people should follow. But your path is your own. Oh sure, others can threaten you. They can try to break your spirit. They can destroy things they think are dear to you. But the fact is, you can make choices. Whether to defy those in charge. Whether to accept life with a reserved "It is what it is." Even if God himself wants to teach us a lesson, it is up to us whether to learn that lesson or decide to learn another lesson (such as "sorry God, you suck, I don't want to be ruled by Marxists/etc, and I think I'll instead die," complete with prolonged mumbling and ranting).

We are responsible for what happens to us. The greatest lesson we can learn is not those the despots want to teach us, such as how to fear or that we should agree with their stupid mindset. It is to understand that we can either reject such outcomes, or we can accept the consequences as our actions. To dwell on how it is fate means being paralyzed because we blame other people for our indecision.

Let me be clear. I do not approve of fighting people at every turn. We serve God first, and this involves having one's own life in harmony. You should neither be stuck in a life you detest because it's "my fate," nor constantly try to impose your own decisions on the world. Decide what to do with your life, but accept God's will in it. Or something.

AIKEN NO MICHU

No Zero Sum Game

As discussed above, many people treat life as a zero sum game. This particularly is true of those in power. They see resources as limited, so they work on management. However, there are fish hatcheries. We can breed more cattle. We can grow more crops, and even have vertically-stacked agriculture. Hell, we can grow on rooftops!

Our classic choices are capitalism and socialism. Either we have a sensible state that has laws that mainly protects against crime and support economic growth, or we have a big government that mainly protects against unequal economic growth by *mandating* sharing. But there's a third option. Simply to have the bare bones. But this still involves high taxes, right? Paying for roads, police, and bridges? Well, no. Those are funded much like many fire departments, by donation and volunteers. The government is not funded at all, because they also are volunteers. When everyone has enough, they can trade for what they want. When the state pays the police, they own them. But this way, they're on our side.

Suppose you have a small farm. One field is big enough that it grows all that you need for the year, but the nearby farmer says you can grow a second field. It's not mandatory, but if you do that, you can give him some of your extra crops, and he can give you his extra milk or eggs. You can also trade your goods with other people. Voluntary sharing out of excess means everyone gets what they need.

Males and Females

We are souls, inhabiting vessels. That is what our bodies are, vessels to house souls. Our bodies have a male or female gender, our spirits typically have a matching nature to our bodies, but our souls are different. They are not part of this material world and cannot be harmed by events or objects within it. Our lives are about growing experiences, and while we shouldn't go around killing people, rationalizing it as just killing their body (evil actions still harm karma), we do have our lives to live and our choices to make.

That being said, there are religious laws against things like crossdressing and homosexuality. I honestly don't care what other people do, as long as they aren't trying to run my life. While the laws say that God thinks these things are a sin, this is between us and God. Maybe God forgives us our sins, maybe God understands our sins hurt us more than other people. I won't pretend to say that I know what God would say in all circumstances. But we are souls. And souls have no gender. How, then, can what happens to the body matter to the soul? If that were true, we are also accepting that there is no afterlife. What we do may matter, if it somehow involves karma or sin. But our bodies are temples. As long as we don't abuse our body, it might be okay?

AIKEN NO MICHII

Importance of Marriage

While I said that male and female bodies are just vessels for experiencing life, I do believe in marriage. But it's not for everyone. This is because I believe that God is in all of us, and so the point is to improve our relationship. If God is part of both ourselves and others, this implies that the best way of doing so is through a committed regular relationship where two people are together for life. That is, marriage. Now, it's not for everyone, because some people are screwed up and seem to ruin relationships. There's also the problem of player culture. When we see other people not as the one for us, who we want to spend our time with, but as just another one who we have sex with, the relationship is messed up. Likewise, when we push each other away, we cannot continue the conversation. This becomes even worse when we tell ourselves lies about how we have done this to help others or being kind. For example, the social distancing. There is nothing kind about rejection, and nothing kind about treating people as sick.

I said marriage is not the only course. Seeing the world as I do, I see myself as married to God. Everyone I meet is my beloved. Unfortunately, like most humans, I do not have a perfect relationship. This is because I often get angry at how events play out, and I am very quick to blame God. But this is like any relationship. When you are with a couple you argue about stuff like who left the toilet seat up. When you are married to God, you quibble instead about those who died in a recent war or how your life sucks right now.

What does this marriage look like? Well, when I was out west years ago, I would keep meeting people on the road that helped me. Later, when I was in a relationship with this one girl named Kira, I kept meeting people who had similar quirks to her. Something about their hair or eyes reminded me of her, or this expression that she kept saying. "No worries," she said. So did many people I met that year, despite me not hearing that much outside *The Lion King*. Kira began to blend with other girls named Emily, Jasmine, Kara, Paula, and even some guys. The important thing was not their past (which was different with variation), nor their religious views, nor their politics. It was that through them, I began to realize what it would mean to meet Jesus, therefore I began to see the meaning of the Savior as less about some suffering sacrificial person, and more about someone who was flawed, broken, and human like me. I remembered a girl named Rebecca, who used to play games with me. It is less important to do good, then, and more important to learn how to hang out and enjoy God's company.

AIKEN NO MICHII

A Human God

We are made in God's image. That is, we have a body, spirit, and soul. We are given the ability to make choices, to feel, to care about others, to make mistakes, and to be in great physical or emotional pain. Likewise, it stands to reason that all of these things are true of God. God can be lonely, too. This is why God interacts with us. It isn't just a matter of toying with us, God actually wants to be around people.

Our God is not one who is some perfect ideal. We humans like to add descriptions to the nature of God, such as omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, or omnipresent. These are actually not helpful and can hinder our belief or understanding. If God is omnibenevolent, why does evil exist? If God is omnipresent, we actually cannot see God because God is dispersed everywhere. If God is omniscient, we find ourselves stuck in fatalism paradoxes. And if God is omnipotent, either he has the ability to do things he cannot do (like creating a boulder too big to lift) or he cannot do that, in which case there are things beyond him. There are workarounds to these theories, but it's simpler to dismiss them as false standards. The only description that works is that God is eternal and has the ability to create reality. We can't even determine whether God has a fixed name or whether God has a gender like us. But we should imagine God as a human.

Lonely God

Everything that is created must someday fall apart. This computer will fail if the world's electricity ever shuts down, as will anything that I have printed out. Likewise, most of the world's monuments would fall apart in decades rather than centuries, if no humans were there to maintain them. This is true of human life as well. An experiment was done with children who were given food and water but no affection. In a matter of weeks, these babies stopped crying and gave in to their despair. They died with no physical cause.

God, on the other hand is eternal. The difference between eternal and immortal is that immortal implies being not able to die, while an eternal being is outside time. God has no beginning nor end, so God cannot be destroyed. But God can probably still feel pain, loneliness, and heartbreak. I imagine God as an adult woman sitting in a white space near a bed. While she dreams, the world continues to exist. When she wakes up, all reality collapses again. Yet although she can create, her deepest desire is for when she awakes for what she created to become real. This is the meaning of legends like *Pinocchio* and *Sleeping Beauty*. It is God's desire to create a companion for herself. For someone to wake her up while she sleeps with a kiss.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Setting Boundaries

As I may have explained, Aiken accepts most of the principles of Christianity. It only differs in that it also accepts some beliefs of Taoism and Buddhism. What is not true is that I necessarily agree with the mindset of most Christians, however. This is because many Christians confuse loving your neighbor and turning the other cheek for becoming wishy-washy at best and submissive at worst. To do the will of God is not to allow evil to invade our lives, nor is it godly to allow Nazis or other extremists to have their way. They think it isn't "nice" to say no, or that it isn't Christian. Remember, Jesus overturned a table because he knew that people were exploited in the temple grounds.

Jesus set boundaries. He set boundaries when people tried to exploit him and tell him to stay in an area. He made time for rest, eating, and for prayer, even when the crowds pushed him to heal more. He set boundaries on who could tell him what to do for the Sabbath, even among the priests. He set boundaries by insisting on having friends, time to be alone, and his own pace of life. He withdrew from the crowds who wanted him, for personal time in prayer. He fought his way through the crowd that was trying to throw him off a cliff for claiming to be the Messiah. He rejected attempts to have him be some sort of revolutionary hero or freedom fighter, people wanting some entitlements like a position in Heaven, and attempts to get him to perform miracles on command. Jesus taught that your priest, your parents, even your best friends could tell you that you're wrong about things you feel like you should do, but what matters is not gaining the world but pleasing God. You must love your neighbor as yourself.

The Buddha set boundaries as well. He refused to allow others to dictate his perception of reality, deciding to devote his life to studying enlightenment. He refused to let his father push him into a marriage, tell him that he needed to be a ruler, or insist he follow his caste. Instead he discovered his own path, without the caste system.

And you also must set boundaries. You need them to keep from getting burned out by constant demands on your time and energy. You must keep people from telling you who you ought to be according to their standards, telling you how your duty is this or that, or trying to abuse you. You have rights to your body, to worship, to go to public places, and to express yourself in art/music/literature/cooking/crafting. You have the right to be here. You are a human, and have a soul. Nobody has the right to take your hopes and dreams from you, although you may permit them to if you choose. Our choices are ultimately ours to make.

AIKEN NO MICHU

One Tin Soldier

Religious or political absolutism is the cause of many of the world's problems. The idea that your mindset is the only one that matters, that you should kill or hurt others for their opinion is exactly the problem.

As are many of these chapters, this one is based on pop culture. This was based on a song of this same name by the Original Caste. In the song, the mountain people even say that they will share their treasure, but the valley people attack and kill them. When they check under a huge stone that supposedly had the treasure underneath, all they find are the words, "Peace on Earth." Realizing that they got nothing for their efforts, they leave in disgust. Many people walk around with this mindset. They want others to give them things they didn't earn but won't appreciate anyway because they can't take care of them. It's nice to own a huge garden or a large pool, but it is quite another to clean either or leaves and debris, much less keep them in working order. Or they think that others are morally wrong, or are jealous of their success. Like Jonah, they think they ought to be punished. But God even cares for the people and animals of Ninevah. Or maybe their religion or worldview is right. But while you do whatever feels right in the name of justice, keep in mind who gets hurt. Even if your intentions are for the best, this implies that you understand the entire situation. Suppose I believed that things were wrong, so I went inside a store and tried to protest. I would probably create a panic, and people might die maybe. This is not to say we need to be wary at all times of doing the wrong thing. That would be a good way to become paralyzed with indecision, as I am now. Rather we should understand that absolute certainty is evil. While we need to believe what is our heart truth, we must temper this with an understanding that we could be wrong.

Truth is Our Weapon

We are not to fight in "holy wars." We are not to be involved in riots. Whenever possible, we are to shun the use of force. If a person comes to our house seeking us harm, I suppose we could fight with defensive weapons. But our first weapon is truth. People are motivated by ideologies. They perceive that what they are doing is right, and will do all manner of awful things because they are "just following orders." Or "justice." But really, because they are misinformed. We are not to kill anyone, but to try to restore relationships if we can. In order to protect others, we need for those blinded by lies to understand that they are lies. Even if it costs our friends, the truth is that it wouldn't sit right to have our friends believe a dangerous lie. Not one that hurts them, or makes them filled with guilt for how they hurt others later on. And the pursuit of truth is that one day these same people who are convinced might in turn become our friends. Truth is a weapon of peace.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Many Sides but One Justice

Because there are many beliefs, it is difficult to understand what is right and wrong because of this. Because there are many worldviews, reality is like a giant version of *Rashomon*. We hear the story from each perspective, but all may potentially be lying, including the judge.

You can determine what is good and what is evil by the maxim, “Evil prevails when good men do nothing.” This is not just a warning that you need to do something to prevent evil from happening (you often don’t, because typically what is evil would be doing far too much), but also to determine what exactly is evil, and why. That is, doing nothing could be seen as a virtuous path if not for the whole, you know, allowing evil to persist thing. What grows up like a weed in the wake of inactivity, however, is typically things like political rioting, bigotry, radicalism, and the erosion of laws that protect our rights. When people overstep the rights of others, this is undeniably evil, no matter what justification they use to rationalize their behavior. Just as doing too little allows evil, doing too much is evil.

There are many sides to issues, but one justice. Justice is not fairness or payback, as I mentioned earlier. It is understanding that humans are inherently flawed, and it is only through grace that our life seems to work. When we get goodness that we very much did not deserve, we understand that there is more to life than expecting others to live up to moral standards.

Consider the FCC. Which is worse? Expecting people to not curse, or censoring their right to free speech? Having people risk their lives, or keeping everyone in a bubble? The more morals we have, the more laws there are. The more laws there are, the less people are forgiven for their actions.

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

Our souls are granted by God, and give us our free will. While some of us believe in fate, the truth is that fate exists only for those without faith. That is, if you have no faith, you live a life without purpose and your choices, whether career or marriage, do not make a significant impact. You fall into a pattern. Meanwhile, our faith grants a purpose for living. So what happens when our understanding of things is distorted? We fall out of touch with the reality of our lives.

Jesus said that those who are guilty of other sins will be forgiven, but those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit will not. What did he mean? Well, the Holy Spirit involves God’s actions and nature within the self. That is, the idea that God would never forgive us, that God would always do something.

We can’t presume to know for certain how God is. God is who he is, as he says of himself in the Bible. Nor can we declare that a person’s faith is misguided. A person’s faith is sacred to them, and should not be defiled. Even if do turn out wrong.

AIKEN NO MICHII

Lizard People and Demons

It is not only possible but probable that humans are not alone in this world. Why do I say this? Because there are elites that do not seem to have made their money honestly through business, who seem to be involved in ruling things, generation after generation. We are not talking about the so-called 1% that our news people keep pushing us to be ashamed of despite having mostly honest earning. We are talking about those in the double digits who own all businesses or all banks or in some cases own entire governments. We are talking about “people” with poor souls who promote worship of the secular, the material over the spiritual, who create celebrity *idols* and pressure people to work towards success as though it were an end goal, wasting their lives. We are talking about people who make profit off of fear and human suffering, or who create cults or movements that serve not humanity but self-destruction. Islam, communism, fascism, these are just names.

What happens when Islam is everywhere? When they have nobody to blame for why their system works, they set up scapegoats, looking for any false Muslims to punish. That this was set up this way appears to be pointing to a great evil working behind the scenes to push humans into killing themselves off. Why does a caste system need to persist in India, if we reincarnate based on karma?

Why is karma not simply left to events, without imposing suffering on an untouchable class? Why does society seem to want to invent mass-killing machines like the nuclear weapon? Why do governments seem intent in taking away liberties rather than preserving them, especially when society is more stable when people are mostly free? Why does this seem weird?

It’s because those pulling the strings are not human, and do not care even if *all humans die*. These are not limited to a race but are rather the sum total of the wealthiest people most of us don’t know by name, the people who organize “peaceful” protests whenever the populace starts to question what we’re seeing too much, the people who run fraternities and secret societies. We need to stop letting these rule.

This is not just some political conspiracy though. Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism mention a class of beings known as *ashura*. These are long-lived beings and spiritually powerful, yet they live their entire existences in envy of the *devas*, or those who have attained true spiritual perfection. Yet even the *devas* are destined to eventually exhaust any good karma they have left. The ideal is humanity, not some inhuman beings aloof from things like feelings and compassion. In this world, we need to be human above all things.

When you put red and white ants in a jar, at first nothing happens. But when you shake the jar, they attack each other, rather than figure out who is shaking the jar. In the same way we are induced to fight our “enemies.” And so I ask you. Who is shaking the jar?

AIKEN NO MICHU

Positivity and Negativity

I was in a concert during the height of Coronavirus hysteria. Yet because there weren't new cases for weeks, they decided that they could allow actual singers without masks to sing. And so I listened, and suddenly, I felt a wave of positivity flow through me. And later that day, the news had hope about people actually resisting mask mandates. It came back with a vengeance though. We are told that the reason that we cannot allow singing in churches and other public places is that our breath spreads disease, and singing spreads breath farther. Or something. This is a clever lie. Actually, singing improves lung health, reduces risk of asthma, it eases stress and improves quality of life, it helps people bond, and it improves heart health. But more importantly, it increases positive emotions and banishes fear. The powers that be want us afraid. They want to control us. They tell us lies about the risk, and how what we should really be doing is staying away from each other. Staying safe. Staying afraid. Wrong. We should be singing. We should sing together. The Bible even mentions in Psalm 100 that we should raise a loud shout for the Lord, and sing for joy. When we sing, we encourage others. We give them hope. We should reject the muting of songs during online church services. We should reject the muzzling of faces, the muffling of voices. We need to shout for joy.

It's not just song either. Our words, our art, and our actions create good or bad auras. Positivity or negativity spreads based on what we say and do. I apologize for often being moody and brooding, but for me it does seem to be an uphill struggle against depression. But this is life. You may have to push yourself to get up in the morning. You may have to struggle just to deal with others. But the point is to try to set an example to others. To give hope to them.

And What Do We Say to Death?

Well, to quote *Game of Thrones*, "Not today."

While anyone who actually believes in the afterlife has no business fearing death (though being human, they fear death even if they believe otherwise), at the same time we do not give into hopelessness but remember that God is with us. Maybe we will die today, but rather than die afraid, we ought to have a defiant attitude. Commit your life not to living safely, but indeed trying to live the best we can. When you die, die fighting, both those who would try to kill you, and those who would steal our life and happiness.

I have been through several close calls. I was in the wilderness exploration class and woke up extremely cold. I had my car's battery break down in a truck stop in the middle of nowhere. I was stuck in a blizzard and driving on icy roads. Yet I always made it through these hazards, because my faith in God and my purpose pulled me through.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Do Dinosaurs Exist?

Several things are widely taught as though they are a given that they are a fact. In every case, when you are taught something is a fact that should not be questioned, you should ask “*cui bono*?” This is a legal term meaning, “Who benefits?” Perhaps the biggest argument in favor of Christianity, is that none of the original followers had any benefit (whereas the Catholic church clearly benefited from Constantine’s setting up church hierarchy). In fact, for three hundred years, the big state of Rome persecuted and tortured Christians. If they had some sort of agenda, it would be far easier to recant what they claimed about believing that a divine human died and rose again. It cost them friends and opened them up to suffering and pain. By contrast, Islam’s founder apparently died rich and with his sect tremendously successful by all standards of this world. By contrast, many dinosaur finders seem to be making extremely large amounts for their findings. Which of these is a lie? Which would the followers endure persecution and poverty even to death to defend the truth of?

Why do dinosaur findings seem tailor-made to push a secular evolution theory (I personally have nothing against theistic evolution)? Why do those who dispute them abruptly lose all funding? Why have most dinosaur fossils only been discovered within the last 200 years, and why do they only seem to happen on dinosaur dig sites, never by accident when plumbers or electricians are digging? Why are children too young to decide what to believe, taken to see dinosaur exhibits?

Cannot Prove the Negative

That said, it is pretty nearly impossible to prove that something does *not* exist, in no place in the universe, at no point in history. We can prove that there is a concerted effort to push false teachings about evolution, complete with prop skeletons. We can prove that a virus on paper appears to multiply well beyond what it should when people are in extreme isolation and that there appears to be political and economic motivation for the safety regulations. We can prove that government involvement appears to have a vested interest in convincing us this is a serious disease. But we cannot prove there are no dinosaurs in alternate realities, and we cannot prove there is no Coronavirus, and we cannot prove there is no God. Sorry atheists. In fact, there is a Coronavirus. But it’s not the strain that gets the media attention. The common cold is a type of Coronavirus, by the way.

Likewise, at one point it was asserted that unicorns hid up near the North Pole. We now claim these are narwhal tusks and unicorns do not exist. Yet having never been to the North Pole except by plane, I cannot verify that these are in fact narwhals and not unicorns. Nor can I be sure that in some reality there are not unicorns, or that there are not invisible elves and unicorns on this one. I just haven’t seen them.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Subjective and Objective Reality

Materialists believe only in objective reality. That reality is just what we see, this curtain surrounding us on all four sides. In this way, if I drop a penny, it will always fall down. Objective reality is real, and is to be trusted. When science rejects objective reality, it has taken leave of real science and is political. Such “science” is really a religion of secular materialism, not actually objective anymore.

But objective reality is not the whole story. The story of Adam and Eve is actually the story of when humans were able to see subjective reality, to see the good or bad sides of events, rather than just seeing “a bus hit a tree and everyone died” to see “those people were my friends and this is bad news.” Subjective reality is our faith and our feelings. Without a view of the afterlife, our lives would be senseless; we would spend all of our time working to earn things and paying no attention to the world beyond this one.

Is this to say that the afterlife is an opinion? Well, yes. It is. But being an opinion doesn’t mean that it is somehow not factual. The thing is, our faith and our ability to band together as people. When we see things a certain way, it changes how we act, which changes events.

Wailing Wall and Zanarkand

In a game *Final Fantasy X*, people routinely use a summoner to defeat a monster named Sin. Doing such a Final Summoning kills both the summoner and Sin. But each Final Summoning becomes Sin, repeating the cycle. They believe one day it will be enough, but there is never enough. They have to break the cycle another way.

Every day, Jews come to visit the Western Wall. They come in hopes that one day, God will restore their fortune. That God will give them back their country, and they can worship in the Temple again. Their devotion is admirable. Their commitment to doing good works is admirable too. But what isn’t admirable is that the Muslims who occupy this mount have no intention of ever giving this land up.

Likewise, the COVID hysteria continues because “if we are just clean enough, people will get better.” To which I quote Yunalesca, “Can humanity ever attain such purity?” The idea that feeding into a cycle will somehow stop it, this is madness. We need to stop things.

It is not right to use power to fight in order to lord over people. Fighting is only to be used for defense, and if one has no taste for fighting, one should follow the nonviolent resistance tactics of Jesus and Gandhi. But the fact is, we should not allow oppression to continue. Nor should we let others sustain a cycle because that’s how things have always been done. Traditions should be kept that uplift humanity. But oppression is not a tradition to keep.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Illusory Universe

Supposedly the world is round. Supposedly there are stars light years away that would burn out by the time we travel in space to them. Supposedly, the Earth also orbits at a speed of 67,000 mph and rotates at about 1037 mph.

But hold up. We can see a distance of somewhere around 3 to 11 miles on a clear day, and even less with obstructions. In the desert, this might be father. And it doesn't appear like we can see particularly far above us. So how can we see stars light years away? Never mind tiny dots, we shouldn't be able to see anything, and we definitely shouldn't be able to see stars and planets with mere telescopes. We could say that the atmosphere is particularly thick, and that at night we can see better. But this doesn't make sense to a nearsighted person, who can barely see 50 feet away without things appearing blurry.

But wait, if Earth really went this fast, why can't we feel anything but gentle winds of usually less than 5 mph? Why don't we feel constant motion sickness? I was in a tower that had a slowly rotating floor meant to "simulate the Earth's motion." Even if we say these two absurd speeds (1037 mph is faster than a tornado, which means it would definitely upend buildings and cause leaves to fly with the force of a bullet; the other one would be like being in a rocket, you'd be glued to the ground) were divided by the total surface area of the Earth, I was able to feel the floor moving at even a slow speed. Nonsense.

And if the Earth is round, how does water stay put? Yes yes, "gravity." Only despite centrifugal/centripetal force, water tends roll out of convex objects. No amount gravity would help this fact. And how is it that people can plant telephone poles and not have them crooked or bridges or tunnels and not have to adjust for the curvature. Somehow building a bridge in a straight line warps in a curve.

What then do I believe is the truth? Well, when you program a game, you have the screen which is currently displaying and other screens that are in memory, to be called up when you get to that screen. In other words, the reality that is physical is a sort of screen around us, but there is also spiritual reality that is a sort of "virtual memory". If a tree falls in the woods, we really don't know if it makes a sound. Our reality is real inasmuch as we can see and hear it, but outside that nothing can be proven. We live in a world that seems real, but is it?

AIKEN NO MICHI

God is Within Us

We humans are not independent creatures. Nor are we animals. In fact, you should suspect anyone who calls us animals, even using natural-sounding language. Such people probably want to dehumanize others. To force others to go naked and hungry, while they perform their sick population control schemes. We don't have the right to abortion, to stamp or mark other humans like cattle. We have a soul.

What does it mean to have a soul? It means that God is within us. It means that despite a person sending us angry letters and not being bothered to have a bit of empathy to the people someone cares about, none of this matters. Even if that person were completely evil (probably not, just misguided), even if their spirit were darkened by depression or other dark emotions, even if a person should lash out at others, their core self is part of God. I suppose it could get so fed up with us that it leaves our body and spirit to figure things out alone, but I'm not going to do any conjecture here. The important thing is that Christ died for our sins, but more than that, we are now part of the Body of Christ. This means that God can work through us, and others can see the face of God through how we treat others.

Incarnation versus the Holy Spirit

While it is true that God is all-pervasive within humanity, this typically manifests as the Holy Spirit. That is, God's spirit is within each of us as our soul. This allows us to do such things as pray, have an afterlife when we die, or in general be connected to all other humans. Since humans are all part of the Holy Spirit, we are all part of what is known as the Body of Christ.

That said, incarnation is an entirely different matter. This involves God being literally born as a human. This is also why such things as walking on water, healing the sick, and raising the dead. Other religions have such things as avatars too, but this is still different. An avatar is like a mask, a false face to hide the actual nature of the deity. For instance, an avatar of Vishnu is actually Vishnu who is disguised as a cow or something. An incarnation is not actually God born as a human. To be incarnated means for God to be "born" within a body.

Indecision

While you can choose any worldview that you desire, the fact is that there is one thing that probably is not okay. That would be indecision. With syncretic beliefs like mine, there is a constant sense of conflict, as I try to sort out my faith. This leads to number of problems, chief of them depression, emotional instability, and fatigue. I urge anyone reading this to believe in an existing religion or come up with your own, but above all, decide this day what you will serve. Satan accuses, confuses, and deceives. To be under a religion that confuses or deceives us is wrong. To know what you believe is to worship God.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Person of Jesus

We like to post paintings of Jesus as some long haired guy with a beard, often with a very European look to his hair and face. But other There is a Korean Jesus, a black Jesus, a Jewish Jesus, a Japanese Jesus, and even a Native American Jesus. Jesus is usually depicted as a man, but a hardcore lesbian might even view her as a woman. The truth of the matter, if you read the Gospel is that Jesus is depicted like us, and more importantly, after the resurrection we hear stories of how Jesus appeared and “the disciples did not recognize him.” Jesus says “whatever you do to the least of these, you have done to me.” From this, we can understand that Jesus outside of his incarnation has no fixed form, appearing to us in the guise of people we meet. Jesus is not some long-haired hippie, but rather that black man we met on the street who thanked us for a gift. Or a woman and mother who is resorting to prostitution to make ends meet. Many Christians would prefer to judge her or tell her to fit into some narrow definition of morality. I would prefer she simply stay sober, and continue to care for her child.

I grew up in the church. But I was always profoundly lonely because we moved every few years, since my mom was a teacher and my dad was a priest. Honestly, I just wanted to settle down in an area, to find someone to love and who loved me back. I also had issues with being on the transgender spectrum as an avid lover of women’s clothing. One day, I met a girl named Kira. I was working for her parents doing yard work, but lost that job. I attended her birthday, and after that stayed in touch with her. At some point, I got freaked out because certain things about her past didn’t add up. I got paranoid, deciding that she was a spy or something. I eventually moved into the city, and saw many people there who reminded me of her. One’s name was Emily, another was Sapphire, one I met at a bar was Jackie, and so on. These were women who related to me, even though I was nothing special. And they all had similar face, or mannerisms, and I must have heard the phrase “no worries” a hundred times. I’ve told this story in more detail above, but the key here is two things. God shows us a form that we are comfortable with in Jesus, and for me it was a woman, because as a transwoman, I was not as okay with men as women. I found men aggressive and overbearing, and I wanted to talk to someone soft and gentle. I also wanted to be like that personally. The second is that Emily was supposedly the name that they would choose when they thought I would be born a girl. That is to say, our relationship with God is meant to be a mirror image of ourselves, if we look at things from a certain perspective. We worship a Christ that is like us. Literally.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Ideal Society

Some people have this ideal in their heads. Free health insurance, free education, welfare for all, and everyone sharing wealth. I won't tell you about the many flaws in this plan such as who gets to pay for it, what happens if they don't pay, and what happens to the productive members of society when many people slack off. Instead, I talk about how it is limited. Biased. One-sided.

For the future to be any good, it needs to make everyone happy, not just yourself. Many of these scatterbrained ideas like a society without money would only work if somehow people gave up their ambitions and desires. On a larger level, this is the idea behind things like socialism, fascism, and communism. The problem is, these work poorly because when people are told to put aside their goals, dreams, and ambitions, they stop working. So then, who builds the roads? Who builds the surveillance system that makes sure everyone is a good little communist? Greed is good. Without an economy, that evil government you want so much will fall apart.

But this Earth is designed to be imperfect. We are not designed to live according to the law, but by grace. We are here in order to learn and grow as souls. When we build such a place, we stagnate, we forget that we are supposed to fall short of glory, that we are supposed to have challenges that make us develop as souls. And some of these will be painful. I have often thought about an ideal world, some sort of mashup between capitalism and communism, and in fact have built such a world in some of my books. But I do not think such a house can be built unless God makes it.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Concerning Rituals

Many religions follow rituals. Light these candles this way. Sacrifice at this altar over here. Drink this cup and eat that bread. Do this or that or the other over and over. While as a Christian, I accept that there are a number of rituals in place, they have a certain role, and many many flaws.

The actual purpose of a ritual is to enforce that followers have a sort of cultural memory, that they understand where they came from and who they are. For example, the Jews celebrate Hanukkah lighting candles each day in recognition of how their temple was defiled, and when they got it back, they had barely enough oil to last one day, yet it burned for eight days. Likewise, the celebration of Passover is to help remember that even during troubling times, God will “pass over” the misfortune intended for others due to proper living.

Yet two things can happen. First of all, when you repeat a ritual over and over again, there is a danger of it becoming routine. For example, if I have specific words to confess sins and I mumble and rush through them, the meaning is lost, as surely as if I apologized to someone yet didn’t actually speak from the heart. Rituals that become too routine can lose their actual purpose. The second issue is subversion of a ritual. If another religion infiltrates an existing one, knowledge of that ritual becomes corrupted. Again from Judaism, the Jewish faith stagnated when the Temple fell, and many of the priests said that they couldn’t have lamb for Passover because there no longer was a Temple. This is a lie. The Temple existed well after the Passover tradition, it’s worship of the Temple rather than God if they change it.

During the COVID thing, we see both of these. People are washing their hands more than an OCD person, convinced that somehow doing this will ever be enough to make them clean. This is a meaningless ritual, because many of them don’t actually associate any significance to hand washing. We see how COVID has subverted Christian ritual. No passing the peace, instead we wave because we cannot be closer than six feet apart. No singing, because singing somehow spreads germs. No proper communion, instead they talked about a spiritual communion involving her showing the wine and bread to us. This is how traditions get subverted.

Overall, I think rituals are important to keep one’s culture intact. But I also think that the idea behind them tends to forget that we are thinking people who continue to learn, grow, and make our own decisions. The tradition of Aiken is to break tradition.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Symbols and Connected Reality

People typically think that the body is all there is, that if you have aches and pain, it's because you hurt yourself or pulled some muscle. These people have obviously never examined how their bodies feel when they are depressed. Your body aches so much you can't move.

Much of pain is based on symbolic reality. That is to say that if I feel like I have too many responsibilities, I may get shoulder pain, as if to say that I am carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders. Or if you are focused on career, you have stomach issues, as if to say that you are not getting enough to eat, even if you are making plenty and just coping with constant stress in the work place.

I believe that even the physical causes of pain are symbolic. That is to say, if I am so vain that I hurt others worrying about my appearance, something is likely to slice up my face to teach me about how this sort of beauty is ugly. Likewise, if I refuse to tell the truth to my loved ones, I am likely to develop lymph nodes filled with throat cancer.

This doesn't extend only to things like pain or events though. I believe that everything that we see as living things is created by the soul carrying out God's mission of creation, so everything in the world we see around us is constructed as a symbol of our internal reality. We can see in a dome a few miles around us in all directions, but we have no way of knowing if there is anything outside our vision, or if it just temporarily exists while we see it. We meet people with symbolic names (my friend for awhile was Elizabeth Lemons, and I eventually figured out that this was a name from *30 Rock*). You see advertisements on TV that seem to be saying things that you connect with, but other people don't see the same way. You get a sermon in church that freaks you out because all week you've been seeing similar things to what you heard in the sermon.

Reality actually only has two things in it, yourself and God. And God is within you, so it is easier to think of this as Yin and Yang. That is to say, yourself and others. Much like with the swamp in the *Empire Strikes Back*, what you carry with you into an area makes all the difference. If you set out hoping to make friends, often (but not always) you will find nothing but friendly people. If you walk around with a chip on your shoulder, you will usually (but not always) find people ready to fight you. But even your enemies are trying to teach you something. Likewise, what you do affects other people.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Ahriman and Ahura Mazda

The world is divided into good and evil, light and darkness. Now, Aiken mostly accepts Taoist complementary dualism. However, this is based on the understanding that God is universal truth, and that God is the ultimate Creator of all things. As it says in the Old Testament, "I form the light and create the darkness; I bring prosperity and create calamity. I, the LORD, do all these things." God is master of Light and Dark, he brings misfortune and fortune alike to ensure our growth as souls. What is truly evil, then, is imbalance. When humans are off track and forget that God is responsible for humanity.

While Judaism and Christianity recognize that God is not equal in power to Satan (unlike Ahriman and Ahura Mazda of Zoroastrianism), for Satan is a mere demon, while God is the ultimate force of all things, there are parallels to be drawn. Both Satan and Ahriman are deceivers. And what is the deception? The doctrine of Ahriman is materialism, the idea that science can be deconstructed from exploration and observation of knowledge into a series of fixed and repeated routines, which then are submitted to peer review. As though a bunch of people scoffing at your observations somehow validates their opinions. The idea that this science has somehow disproved the supernatural, that this world is all there is, and that God is a mere superstition because we can now explain how weather or the Big Bang or other phenomenon works. Beyond pointing out that much of science was based on the work of theists, including the Big Bang.

Worse, secular materialism paints a picture of a world where free thought is discouraged, where humans are a sort of semi-conscious primate who depends on group-think and cannot function without being led around by rulers and experts. They say, "Let us tell you what you need." Telling you how to vote for your politicians who try to manipulate you, and if you should ever wise up, rule over you like overlords. But the truth is, human beings are perfectly capable of ruling themselves without bosses, leaders, or rulers. The only thing needed is self-discipline. To be able to work hard for what you want, and reject what you do not.

Ahriman is a deceiver. This false world takes many forms: like warning of brutal weather to scare you about the safety of your house, or warning of diseases or other crises in order to pressure you into hysteria. But a pure mind develops the ability to reject false reality, and to understand the power of illusion. Even a storm can disappear like a puff, if you can explain why it is not real. Faith and logic determine truth, not falsehood and peer pressure. To be calm and determined, this is the way to rid the world of fear and other false visions.

AIKEN NO MICHII

Bride of God

The New Testament compares in parables the kingdom of God being like maids waiting for a bridegroom. Others Yet where is the bride? It turns out, that the Church itself is regarded as a bride. Likewise, the Old Testament speaks of how God is married to Israel. Only the problem is, through much of the Old Testament, the marriage in question sounds on the verge of divorce. We ought to regard ourselves as a wife waiting to be married. A woman who has had her heart broken again and again, and is waiting for her groom.

Life is hard. There may be wars, plagues, famines, riots, times when people are imprisoned or oppressed. But we need to remember that we are a woman waiting to marry God.

Accepting Judaism

Jews and Christians are held to a different set of standards. That is, the Law that is intended to save Jews is actually regarded as a curse to Christianity, and Jesus is regarded as a false prophet.

We should not go around with the mindset that Jews killed Jesus, or are somehow lacking in understanding. We are responsible for understanding and developing a relationship with God, not for clinging to dogma, which for all we know could have been tampered with.

We must regard free will as part of God's design, or else we are doomed by birth and unable to find salvation. However, we must also understand that Judaism's continued separation from Jesus is not a mistake but part of God's plan. It is through them that Christians can reclaim the actual truth of God's word in eras where the world seeks to obscure it in state-run falsehoods. When the priests teach socialism or Islam, it is important that a people exist who remain aware what the original teachings are. Human beings find their purpose from God, and as such fall prone to screwy teachings, relying on other people telling them what is right and wrong.

This book was written because I increasingly came to the conclusion that the average believer, be it Buddhist, Christian, or Jew, has been led away from their relationship with the true God and into false teachings. While there are many teachings, you must remain faithful, neither rejecting honest criticisms nor dwelling on accusations.

I see myself as a spiritual archaeologist. I try to sort out what is true or false despite the passage of time, to figure out what is the real truth of things. I don't always succeed, and sometimes I wind up with heresy. But when Jews are told to obey rules, not understanding why they do so means that the spiritual connection is lost. You should not follow spiritual leaders, you should follow God and his laws. Yet we must understand that we won't live up to them.

AIKEN NO MICHİ

Rejecting Gnosticism

Gnosticism was a Christian heresy that taught that the physical world was wholly evil, and as such Jesus was not a physical being. The Gnostics rejected physical reality entirely. The problem is, rejecting the physical entirely is just as dangerous as materialism. Materialists believe this world is all there is. Not only does this lead to hysterical fear of things like disease, war, and death in general, but it also leads to the notion you can end problems by killing people. Gnosticism is ironically just as dangerous for the opposite reasons. If you don't value physical reality at all, what is to stop you from raping, killing, or stealing from whoever you want? Life is valuable. The Christians put it as being "in the world but not of the world." The Taoists would put it as balancing Yin and Yang, Body and Spirit. The Buddhists would understand it as accepting that our bodies experience rebirth. Regardless, the lesson here is this: we are given mortal bodies in order to learn and to teach others, they are supposed to die and our spirit is released. We are not supposed to try to live forever in some sort of science utopia, most methods of doing this are impure, and will instead trap a person in a sort of undeath. It is good for a person to die, and it is good for a person to live. We shouldn't embrace a world without physical reality either. But we should reject hysteria, and develop the ability to dismiss false realities.

Rejecting Politics

As you've probably figured out, I have pretty strong conservative opinions. However, politics is simply another trap of the physical world. You are free to vote if you wish, but we must reject attachment. The fact is, this world is not our world. To be religious means we value the spiritual world, not try to impose our agenda. Better not to vote, except that in this case, minority of people decides everything.

The wicked scream at the sky because elections don't go their way. They burn cars and trash buildings. They are unhappy because they trust in the physical world. But many of the wicked think of wealth as based on luck, and thus think they have the right to take from others because they weren't "lucky." Don't emulate them.

Elections can be rigged. Kings can be murdered. Governments can misrule. Your body is here to experience lessons that help you grow spiritually, and much of this involves hardship. But in order to transcend this world, we need to understand that pain and suffering are temporal. Reject politics, reject leaders, reject materialism. Have faith in other things. Let them sell their crazy somewhere else. Do not fawn over political leaders as though their words are the words of Christ. Do not fear the power of leaders. God is about people, not politics. If you must vote, remember God is in control, no matter what humans do.

AIKEN NO MICHİ

Problems of One-World Religion

It's tempting to have a vision of a better world, where everyone is united. Where everyone is peaceful, gets along, and there are no religious conflicts. It doesn't matter if you're Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, or whatever. Many people would think Earth would be a paradise if everyone in the world shared their religion. But it doesn't always work that way. At least some religions have the sense to stay within their own territory.

Baha'i believes something like that. They teach God is called by various names but is still the same all over the world, that all religions teach the same basic message, and that humanity is actually one race and is destined to unite at some point. Nonsense. There are common points to many religions, but there is a distinct problem. If you asked a Muslim to unite in peace and love and harmony, they would probably hurt you. Their beliefs say they cannot mix with Jews or Christians, and they levy a tax to nonbelievers. The fact that they treat apostates like nonbelievers, and apostates are usually treated terribly is a big hint that this idea that everyone will seamlessly unite cannot work. That's not even mentioning doctrines that different religions squabble over.

All that is just assuming a group is being idealistic. Another question of uniting people under one religious or government vision is "Whose vision?" While it might look to the outside like peace, what happens if you disagree? Do they try to hurt you? Do you get isolated from other people? And what happens when this world religion decides that it is on the side of world government? You get forced to join the state cult. It doesn't matter even if they say the state is officially atheist, you're expected likewise to not believe in any "troublesome superstitions." And if the faith is weird enough, people's behavior likewise becomes disturbed.

The world is violent because nations and religions don't always see eye to eye. But for everything to be at "peace," people would have to be silenced or oppressed. Religions likewise divide into factions all the time, because if everyone agreed on beliefs, this world would be worse.

All Religions are not the Same

Many people who want to brush religion with broad strokes, claiming all religions are this or that. Even I originally did this in the *Mune Shinri*. These people are ignorant. They usually have marginal understanding of one or two religions (usually Christianity and Judaism, or Christianity and Islam), which they conflate with each other. They are also usually trying to each sell some peace-and-love unity message or trying to condemn all religion in order to justify their atheism. But religions vary from having no gods, to many gods, to one god or God. They have an afterlife, reincarnation, rebirth, or something else. We need to let this mentality go, and make up our mind.

AIKEN NO MICHU

The Meaning of the Crucifixion

People often offer Jesus's crucifixion as a sacrifice offered for our sins. That is one reason and I accept it, because I accept the concept of grace as a reality on this Earth. They repented using blood sacrifices, but whether or not this was enough to forgive them, the larger world remained cursed by not being part of salvation, and the Jews who failed to live up to the law were cursed by the law. And so, a specific sacrifice was needed. The metaphor of the Paschal lamb as Passover sacrifice so that the punishment for sins will not cause the death of the people is echoed, but in this case, another passage is also referenced, that everyone who hangs on a tree is cursed. Where does this curse come from? "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance." Jesus bore this curse of being declared punished by God, for a crime he didn't really commit, that is to say, he took the sins of the mob and bore them, in order that the sins not just of the mob but the larger world be forgiven. But I believe that nothing in the Bible has a single reason, but rather there is a sort of rule of three. So what are the other reasons?

Well, there is a fulfillment of a promise in the Old Testament. When Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son, he did not refuse but took him up to the mountain to be offered. But God saved his life by offering a sacrifice instead. God made a covenant with the Jews, and kept it with them despite their numerous instances of turning away and worshiping secular gods made of stone. In God offering his own son, he was declaring that he was willing to ask nothing of his people that he would not be willing to do himself. He was keeping his promise.

There is also another reason. Jesus was born. He died. I want you to think about this. Before Jesus's death, the cross had another meaning. It meant joining of Heaven and Earth, a union of spirit and matter, and divine in humanity. Jesus is the Word and was present even from the beginning. He was the personal "face" or image of God, the image which we are made in. God is with us, has always been with us, and has been part of the "least of these" since the dawn of time, the people we meet in our daily life. However, this was God showing this by being part of the fabric of humanity, by living and dying with us. When the temple curtain fell, this was another image, that the illusion that God is somehow hidden from us is broken. "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain..." We speak of Jesus coming again in the last days. But the truth is, for those who understand who Jesus is, you can always meet him. He is risen.

AIKEN NO MICHI

Those Who Would Save Their Lives

One of the most confusing passages in the Bible is when Jesus says, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” As someone who has frequently struggled with depression, I found this an extremely tempting passage to make a quick end to your life. But after several times of almost committing suicide, I am beginning to believe that this is a good way to become spiritually lost. To give your life for the sake of a good cause is one thing, to be driven to despair and suicide is to be destroyed spiritually as well as bodily. Let's pass on that idea. So, what does this mean?

To really understand this passage, we should read it in context, and then read other passages. In context, the passage right before has Peter trying to prevent him from being crucified. He's doing this because it needs to be done, or “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Jesus knew that if he did not become the scapegoat, that his friends and family would also be targeted. Eventually, they were anyway, but this is because they decided to take the risk, to follow him. Peter in the passage before is really saying, “We need to be safe Jesus. Rome is big and scary, and we shouldn't cross them.” But Jesus had to continue his ministry, he had to live life according to his calling. To do otherwise would allow evil to prevail.

The Bible also shows several passages where suicides are done or attempted. Abimelech, Saul, and Judas are all cases of suicide, and each time, the implication is that the suicide is a product of a ruined life where one stopped trusting God. Elijah, too, considers suicide, thinking that all have abandoned God. But God took him to a mountain and told him to stop giving up, that there were a remnant who believed.

Awhile back, during the COVID hysteria, I decided that nobody would stand against this nonsense, so I was ready to just fall asleep and keep sleeping until I died. But like Elijah, my parents reminded me that there were still people who privately hated these rules, and others publicly protested against this shit. I wish I knew what to do about this, but I decided those oppressing me wanted to drive people like me to suicide, so the best revenge on them would be to continue living.

Lastly, Jesus's three temptations, two were to make bread and to throw himself off a mountain. But these are actually opposite extremes to life: safetyism and self-destruction. Both of these are unhealthy. We should make a conscious choice to live fully, or to die heroically. This isn't to say that you set out intending to die. Rather, understand that to live fully is to risk your life. This is not the same as skydiving and mountain climbing, this is trying to live your life, knowing that people may hate who you are. This is being transgender in a place that hates you, or being Christian in a place that only accepts transgender people. To live fully for Jesus, to bear your cross, is to risk death.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Aiken as Syncretism

Aiken is a syncretic religion. From Christianity it gets its belief in Jesus, the personal face of God. It believes in the concept of grace and that a person's sins are forgiven, not because they are good enough but because God has forgiven regardless of how they are. From Buddhism, it takes the notion of rebirth and that reality is cyclic, and life is meant to teach us truths and encourage us to grow spiritually. This also has to do with dispelling illusions that keep us trapped in unhealthy cycles. I also rejected much of the trappings of most religion (such as worship of deities, the veneration of temples and holy places, etc). God is God not because he is a deity to be worshiped like Hera, Thor, or Osiris. God is God, because he created the universe. The world we live in is proof there is God, because a world without a creator is like trying to explain how a canoe was made if there is no shop, no designer, and no tools. And God is God because of how he loves and cares for us. Unlike most Buddhists, I cannot be an atheist. But I do believe that life is a series of repeated tries to straighten out emotional and spiritual issues, to resolve problems and find enlightenment and release. Lastly, I accept Taoism. Taoism is rather difficult to explain, but the best analysis of it is that there are cycles in life, and something good or bad things happen. Heck, sometimes things that seem good turn out to be bad, and vice versa. The point of all of this is not to descend into indifference and moral relativism, but rather to keep a cool head and recognize events as they are, not to assign words like "evil" to something, unless it actually causes death or destruction. Importantly, one's life must be in balance and there is a sense of duality between ourselves and God. It is a relationship rather than a sort of subject-master thing. I reject absolutist notions in favor of understanding that what seems good to me isn't necessarily good for anyone else. I also reject the notion of altruism. The worst evils done to the world are a result of misguided people telling themselves something was for the greater good. You need to understand that humans are good *and* evil.

All of this doesn't necessarily mesh well together, though. In practice, I don't really do a great job of turning the other cheek, I tend not to follow any of these religions as closely as I could want. I am a flawed and confused person. But anyway.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Humanity

Many religions teach rules. Do this, don't do that, this is taboo, that is virtuous. Now, most of them are somewhat moral rather than immoral (that is, they don't teach that murdering babies is good, rape is good, or chopping off heads because someone doesn't agree with your teachings) but the problem of rules is that I do not wish to rule other people. While I want to develop a religion, my purpose for doing so is not to have everyone agree. Suppose I made a religion where everyone wore a ShyGuy mask, a heavy robe, and carried around a fan. While this is rather distinctive, ultimately this sort of lockstep is a dreary picture of what humans should be. Aiken should not ever be about all followers having the same dress code, or the same beliefs, or all thinking that if you do this or that in order to be saved.

What I want when writing this work is to produce a foundation. A person's worldview ought to be built on sound teachings, not worship of experts nor veneration of so-called holy places, but an understanding of who you are, what you believe, and what your deepest motivations are. My followers may be atheist, pantheist, henotheist, agnostic, or part of another religion. The only true thing that I wish for all followers is their humanity. Their ability to be unique, and to arrive at their own conclusions. To get mad, to cry, to laugh, to love, and even occasionally to hate. Religion that teaches that humans should somehow seek not to be human is teaching something wrong. Rather, we should be as human as possible, remembering the foundations of having a meaningful and happy life. And just because I teach these things doesn't always mean that I myself always live up them. All of us have fallen short of standards, even our own.

Immortality

Death is a reality, immortality is a delusion. To convince ourselves that we can do something in order not to die is to be afraid of death. But denial creates mental strain, as I have mentioned before with discussion of other delusions. The more we lie to ourselves that taking precautions will somehow spare us, the more stressed out and afraid we are. No amount of cleanliness, no amount of diet and exercise, and no precautions prevent this. We should not be afraid of death, because the spirit and the soul live on. Death of the body, however, is a fact of life.

The closest thing to immortality for living things is to fulfill the purpose of your life. To remember and to be remembered, to love and to be loved. Live your life, have faith, and receive your rewards when you die. The atheists fear spiritual immortality, for they see themselves as punished in the afterlife. They are told a lie by their Accuser, and so they seek either for their spirits to be snuffed after death or to somehow avoid death. Ironically, they live in a far worse Hell. God is not here to punish us. We do that ourselves with our Knowledge of Good and Evil. We will have immortality maybe, but not immortality on this Earth. We have an Afterlife.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Patience

As I said in the section about fatalism, it is important to make choices, and not just blame your indecision on fate. But there also ought to be something to be said against always taking matters into your own hands. Sometimes we have desires, and we pursue them too fully, ignoring all consequences. Other times, we see evil or injustice, and our instinct is to behave like a vigilante. But this is not God's way.

Suppose you are promised that you will get into a college, but instead of waiting on the acceptance, you decide to sneak on to the grounds. If discovered, you face shame and rejection. Or suppose rather than waiting for dinner, you eat some greasy snack and have no room. You now have no room for what would have been a nice dinner. This is true even if the reward is a given, it turns sour precisely because you took matters into your own hands.

God will provide the things that matter in this world. But when you don't trust God, when you try to force things, even should things turn out okay, they aren't as good as they could have been. Patience doesn't mean "to wait," it means "to suffer." The implication is that we suffer for what we want in life, and live in hopes that God will make things all the more joyful when we finally do have our heart's desire.

Charity

Yes, I know. Aiken seems like a very self-centered offshoot of Christianity and Buddhism (and Taoism). Charity is indeed a virtue. However, I do not believe in blind virtue, that is to tell yourself that you are doing good actions without consideration of the law of unforeseen consequences.

Whatever actions you do, if you do not perform due diligence, then you have only yourself to blame. Suppose you gave to charity that gives to starving kids in Somalia. Even if you know for a fact that the charity doesn't embezzle their money, we cannot know that their government doesn't take the money.

This is not to say that we should excuse not giving to others. I remember going to Africa, and this liberal family scolded us for giving our sandwiches away. "They'll get used to handouts!" they said, while not giving anything. Okay, that may be so, but these people are in front of us, and they're hungry. When people are in front of you, by all means give to them if you have the money and such. Approach charity in the same way you approach your religion, study and make your own decisions. In this way, you can be satisfied that your gift is working. One approach is to support businesses and charities with the "teach a man to fish" approach, another is gifts that aren't monetary, such as Heifer's donation of livestock, or charities that plant trees.

AIKEN NO MICHU

To Reconnect

Many of us have broken relationships. We have people who hurt us, left us, manipulated us, or betrayed us. We are afraid to trust again. Or we think that love is a zero sum game, that love is finite and if someone else is happy, that our happiness goes away. Or we have seen people offer us love only to hurt us. Over and over again.

Many of us carry these scars. We think of others as our actual enemies, the people who are trying to take away our happiness. Now, there do seem to be some genuinely cruel people, which is why Stockholm Syndrome is a thing. But there are also people who are very prickly. Who keep others at arms length because they might try to change us, hurt us, or something else. But we can accept that people won't get us, and as long as our friends respect our different view and don't stomp all over us, we can learn to trust again. Or we can find people who do understand us, and reconnect with people of like minds.

The purpose of religion is to reconnect with God. The purpose of love is to reconnect with other people, and learn to repair heartbreak.

To Enjoy Life

To find the purpose for life, to make one's personal faith, is to attempt to scrape out meaning for life. This is not "Do whatever you want, as long as you don't hurt anybody," because that tends to be extremely myopic and ignores people you're hurting, nor is it like a bucket list but rather to focus on developing one's path in life. Being happy is not so much doing fun things, as finding meaningful ones.

We struggle with life because of two unhealthy extremes. If we view only the physical world as important, we live in fear of harm coming to us, and in constant fear of death. But if we accept, as I say, that reality is illusory and that the spiritual world is our goal, then as I have discovered, life in this world becomes pointless. Therefore, balance is called for. Enjoy life and physical pleasure, but be aware that the spiritual world is way more important.

We need to accept our experiences on this world, and not be indifferent to this reality. But at the same time, we shouldn't be afraid of what happens to this body. In this was we avoid the problems of secularism and the suicidal or destructive nature of philosophies like Gnosticism. Although I will still have a slight tendency toward depression and regarding this world as worthless, I think it is key to do as Christians say and "be in the world but not of the world." To realize that God can be seen on this Earth *and* in the Afterlife.

AIKEN NO MICHU

To Help Others

While it is tempting to spend all of your effort making friends, or trying to find a purpose to your own life, I believe the idea of balance in life is important. If you see people suffering or in pain, our purpose on this Earth is not simply to be observers seeking knowledge or enlightenment. We are humans, and that means not only flaws but our empathy is a key function of who we are as humans in this world.

We should not live in isolation but see ourselves as part of a team. If we play a game and gang up on one person, we are no different from how the machine plays it. The machine only understands how to crunch numbers in order to win, it doesn't understand the concept of teamwork with humans. It relies on "garbage in, garbage out" programming, and even a game like bridge will involve your partner playing poorly and your opponents playing well. Computers understand doing simple actions and providing a challenge by playing to win. They do not however understand game theories that operate outside of zero sum thinking. Humans can cooperate with some or even all players to create a desired outcome. They can even operate on a negative sum thinking, sacrificing what they have so that another can benefit (such as sloughing so their partner can win their tricks). A computer always plays until they have no high cards left. This makes their actions predictable, and if a real person tried to do life the same way, they would constantly be unhappy. They would always be working and striving, no matter who got hurt and who hurt them. But machines can't feel the pain of loss at card games. Which is good, because if a robot ever was programmed to hate losing, one lost game in chess would probably create a robot apocalypse.

You have choices. You can help people out who seem to need your help. You can do it in person or through mail of some sort. You can focus on helping only those you know. You can even decide that other people never helped you, so why should you help them? I cannot make these choices for you, only to tell you that many people will expect for you to make the "right" choices. As if they can know that what was right for them has anything to do with what is right for you.

There are a lot of shoulds and oughts in this world, and a great many people quick to tell us what they are. On the other end of the spectrum are people who delight in evil, excuse themselves, and try to make evil the norm. I am neither a moralist nor a rationalizer, rather I take the middle road of standing up for human freedom and responsibility. You do not need to help others, but you should definitely avoid hurting other people. First do no harm. Everything else is fine.

AIKEN NO MICHU

Problems of Altruism

While I talked about the human need to help others, I feel that I should clarify something, since a great deal of people have bought into a false theory of what is good.

Whenever people are debating issues like whether it is better to care for loved ones or sacrifice them in order to save the greatest number of people, it seems like inevitably the Trolley Problem comes up. Supposedly on one track is one person, either your sweetheart or your mom. On the other track are 1000 people. You cannot simply do the better option and save both groups, nor can you sacrifice for those thousand people. The author of the challenge probably expect you to do the second one, and keep adjusting the challenge until you agree.

Those proponents of altruism often side with the philosophy of Bentham and Mill with their Utilitarianism, maintaining that the needs of the many logically outweigh the needs of the few. To which I would say, “Your mother? Your dear mother who raised you for 30 years, who loves you, who wants what’s best for you? You would throw her under a bus (trolley) in order to protect 1000 strangers, may not even thank you, and probably will go on with their lives without remembering that incident. **What is wrong with you?!!** You can’t get your mother back. Thousands of people are born every day. Who cares about them? ”

Ayn Rand lays out the inherent problem of altruism. Someone who is willing to put aside their life for others (this even includes volunteer work, if it becomes a duty that people expect of you) is also willing to sacrifice other individuals to the state. A state might demand you stop breathing, as appears to be the case both with carbon tax and the mask mandate. Doesn’t it bother you that the government hates you so much that they feel like the air you exhale is pollution? That they want to tax you to breathe? That they want to prevent you from breathing by covering your face with cloth or glass, telling you that you are sick by default? In the past, big government has demanded the wives of citizens as their first night. Why trust them to care for you?

You don’t have a duty to some faceless masses known as the poor, nor do you have a patriotic duty to some government entities. You have a duty to yourself, your friends, your family, maybe people who knock on the door asking for help. Jesus said to help the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, and the imprisoned. But Jesus also said, “The poor are always with us.” We can’t live our lives putting the needs of the many ahead of the needs of the few. What matters is the person you meet face to face. You should help them. They will remember you.

AIKEN NO MICHU

The Problems of Positive Thinking

Remember how I talked about positivity and negativity, and how people have a sense of the “power of positive thinking”? Well, let’s work through why this is a good system and a bad one.

What this generally means is that because the world reflects our self, events happen in relation to our feelings and our expectations. This can work two ways (because reality follows our expectations): it can match our positivity/negativity or it can go contrary to it. This depends on whether we have a mindset that events match how we are feeling or whether we think that just when things are going great something will ruin it (and vice versa).

The inherent flaw of living in the physical world (Earth) is that we are struggling to reconcile our feelings with our desires. At the time of writing this, I had called a lady about work. It used to be that she was easy to get in touch with her, but after the whole pandemic thing, I’ve been feeling isolated and out of sorts. But I wanted to try working again, and I wanted something to do I guess. She gave me an uncertain answer about how she had been sick lately but she would call me back with her answer. About halfway through breakfast, I thought about my dad saying I seemed kind of tired and realized that I was actually disappointed that she gave me an uncertain answer. I got a call back telling me actually she had an appointment that day so she would have to call me back another week. In other words, the moment I felt sad...

This system of positive reinforcement works very well if you’re a positive person. When you love yourself, others love you. But if you have a number of deep-seating emotional insecurities, you wind up feeling awful most of the time. If positive feelings reinforce with positive experiences, then overly confident people get everything they need while this with issues routinely feel trapped in torment.

The other system has its own problems however. Suppose you hate yourself and someone loves you, but whenever you start feeling good enough to love yourself, someone makes you feel like shit. That begins to feel like a weirdly supportive yet abusive relationship. You never really feel fine, you just wind up feeling very emotionally gray. While it does resolve the problem of feeling like life is unjust, there’s the pervasive sense that life is anhedonia, that you never are *really* happy.

As you can see, both systems are inherently flawed. The only way out of this deal, I suppose, is to find someone who loves you, no matter what. If you can feel a steady support, regardless of what the rest of the world is doing with your positive or negative thoughts, you can cope.

AIKEN NO MICHU

You Are Not Alone

The world tells us that we need to be polite, to share, to be kind. That's probably true. When you don't do those things you tend to incur karmic issues, although you can also reach an extreme: so polite you can't speak your mind, so kind that you let others walk on your rights, so sharing that you share when you don't have enough or with people who take and never give. It also tells us many other things about how we need to measure up to others. That we aren't as successful as this person, as virtuous as that person, as whatever as a third person. That we need a faster car, better home, or to live nearer to the city.

During your life, you may be pronounced a failure. Maybe you didn't sell any novels, and nobody knows you. Maybe you never succeeded in making money. Maybe you weren't as good a person as others thought. Maybe you're homeless. Maybe you're lonely.

But... you're not alone. The Methodist prayer book assures "we are not alone, we live in God's world." We see all sorts of misfortune in this world. We may have friends leave us, we may have a bad breakup, or we may have government run our lives. What then, does it mean to say that you are not alone? It means that God is part other people through Christ. It means that God is part of the created world. And it means God is even part of our hearts and souls. The Trinity is not just some three-headed god, it is to say that there is nothing that exists that isn't part of God, even evil and misfortune.

When we are oppressed, we are bullied because we seem isolated, just as surely as a bully beats up a friendless kid on a playground. And yes, sometimes the way God keeps us company feels toxic, but it mirrors the way we feel inside. If we arrested, God keeps us company through our lawyer, the police officer, the judge and jury, and even the audience. If we go to a party, God is there. Even when we are stranded, God shows up. We have no worries in this life. Not really.

Do not measure your life according to the standards of others. If you want to spend your entire life trying to get maximum statistics on *Final Fantasy X*, that is entirely up to you. The important thing is not to feel sorry for yourself about it. Instead, see about finding friends who share your interests. God declared everything good that he created, but there was one thing that he said that was not good. He said that it is not good to be alone. This does not mean we are a bad person for being lonely. Far from it. God feels for us, and wants to be near us. Remember, God is immortal and likely lived countless years without anyone nearby. God knows about being alone. But we are not, and never will be alone. For the created world is there to keep us company, and when we die, we go to be with God. Yup, like the Runaway Bunny.

We are not alone. We live in God's world. Thanks be to God.

Seimei Himitsu

SEIMEI HIMITSU

Part 1: Natural Language

SEIMEI HIMITSU

Pictography

I wanted to create a language that was based on universally seen ideas. For example, trees, the sun, hills, or mountains. Each word is three components: a symbol or pictogram, a letter or syllable, and a meaning. For example A is pronounced A, but has the symbol and meaning for "tree". The way this language works is by compositing ideas together. For example, AJ is represented as "tree"- "man", and is use to represent anything from a horticulturalist or forest ranger to a nudist. Which brings us to the second point, this language is highly based on subjective idea. The word "tree" could refer to anything from a hemlock to a maple, the word "wind" could mean anything from a gentle gale to a tornado. This is by design. I made this language based on a concept from a book I wrote. In it, the language was written for Elves, who had the psychic ability to intuit exact concepts from images. Obviously, this isn't the case for us pathetic humans, but I liked the idea of an open-ended language, where a word can mean multiple things.

The language is based on a mashup of English and Japanese. I found that I didn't have enough letters to represent all the concepts that I wanted, so I made some English letters, and some Japanese like syllables. Though when I got to the end of it, there were some syllables that Japanese actually doesn't have. The cool thing about this language is that you can write as though you are writing in English (e.g. THE CAT IS AT THE HOUSE), or use the language is it was intended for pictographic concepts. When making these words, capital letters are single letters while syllables are lowercase. In theory, you could add more concepts by simply filling in more sounds.

Meanings of Pictography

Tree/Nature	Sun/Day	Moon/Month	Eclipse/Marriage
			
Clouds/Darkness	Light/Holy	Stars/Night	Star of David/Jews
			
Mountain/Climb	Person/Man	Flower/Virgin	Child/Youth
			
House/Building	Thunder/Judge	Cold/Ice Crystal	Heart/Love
			
Up/North/More	Right/East/Toward	Down/South/Less	Left/West/Away
			
Taoism/Balance	Jesus/Christian	Triangle/Slope	Box/Square
			
Circle/Pi	Angle/Looking Up	Book/Education	Clock/Time/Hour
			
Road/Path	River/Trail	Bottle/Container	Chair/Sit
			

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Table/Meal	Sword/Aggression	Shield/Protection	Clothing/Modesty
Hat/Knowledge	Wand/Magic	Stick/Common	Log/Lumber
Music/Dance	Doorway/Closed	Archway/Open	Key/Method
Lock/Puzzle	Female/Creative	Male/Governing	Death/Skull
Egg/Life	Valley/Depression	Sunrise/Sunset	Zero/Not/Void
Wind	Fire	Water	Earth
Snake/Poison	Food/Apple/ Knowledge of G&E	Animal/Pet	Bird/Sky
Sea Life/Ocean	Inside/Enter	Outside/Leave	Around/Avoid
Through/Divide	Center/City	Flame/Cooking	Rain/Tears
Medicine/Drugs	Equality/Justice	Inequality/Injustice	Breath/Air/Spirit
Royalty/Kingdom	Angels/Immortal	Art/Writing	Bed/Inn
Drink/Bar	Part/Pie	Radius/Eat	See/Awake
Ignorant/Asleep	Wall/Isolation	Bridge/Connection	Prison/Slavery

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Freedom/Breaking	Hill/Parabola	Coin/Money	Give/Take/Do
			
Rock/Obstruction	Danger/Fear	Fortress/Castle	Plumbline/Prophet
			
Measurement	Ship/Airship	Vehicle	Twins/Friends
			
Couple/Multiply	Map/Earth	Crowd/Army	Mirror/Self
			
One to Four/Grain	Five/Bundle	Ten/Bow	Hundred/Grave
			
Thousand/Cataract	Broadcast	Yahweh/God	
			

Pronunciation of Pictography

The 'uh' sound is not considered a vowel sound, as you naturally say it when clearing your throat or trying to think. The letters hhave a basic pronunciation, and then can also be combined with other letters within a syllable. However, this language does not readily lend itself to diphthongs, setting those aside for additional sounds. The capital letters are meant to represent distinct sounds, not the beginnings of sentences, so baK is pronounces "bah-kuh" not like the English "bake." Lastly, the z can be pronounced with a z sound or an sh sound.

A (ah)	B (buh)	C (chuh)	D (duh)
			
E (eh)	F(fuh)	G (guh)	H (huhh)
			
I (ee)	J (juh)	K (kuh)	L (luh)
			
M (muh)	N (uhn)	O (oh)	P (puh)
			
Q (kwuh)	R (ruh)	S (suh)	T (tuh)

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U (oo)	V (vuh)	W (wuh)	X (ksuh)
			
Y (yuh)	Z (zuh/shuh)	ba (bah)	bo (boh)
			
be (beh)	bi (bee)	bu (boo)	ca (chah/shah)
			
co (choh/shoh)	ce (cheh/sheh)	ci (chee/shee)	cu (choo/shoo)
			
da (dah)	do (doh)	de (deh)	di (dee)
			
du (doo)	ga (gah)	go (goh)	ge (geh)
			
gi (gee)	gu (goo)	ha (hah)	ho (hoh)
			
he (heh)	hi (hee)	hu (hoo)	ka (kah)
			
ko (koh)	ke (keh)	ki (kee)	ku (koo)
			
ma (mah)	mo (moh)	me (meh)	mi (mee)
			
mu (moo)	na (uhnah)	no (uhnoh)	ne (uhneh)
			
ni (uhnnee)	nu (uhnnoo)	pa (pah)	po (poh)
			
pe (pch)	pi (pee)	pu (poo)	ru (roo)
			

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ro (roh)	se (seh)	si (see)	so (soh)
			
ta (tah)	to (toh)	te (teh)	ti (tee)
			
tu (too)	wa (wah)	wo (woh)	we (weh)
			
wi (wee)	wu (woo)	ya (yah)	yo (yoh)
			
ye (yeh)	yi (yee)	yu (yoo)	za (zah/shah)
			
zo (zoh/shoh)	ze (zeh/sheh)	zi (zee/shee)	zu (zoo/shoo)
			
ai (i)	ei (ay)	au (ow)	oi (oy)
			
An, bil, tri, kat (ahn, beel, tree, kaht)	hamsa (khahmsah)	are (ahreh)	ank (ankhuh)
			
mille (meeleh)	nyan (uhnee-ahn)	Yhwh (Unpronouncable)	
			

Numbers

The numbers of the language are done as a sort of mashup between Hindu (commonly called "Arabic" numbers, but the Arabs didn't invent them) numbers, Chinese numbers, and Roman numerals. From 1 to 4 is the same symbol, then five, then 5+(1 to 4), then 10. After that you repeat the same number after 10. Then you proceed before the thens, so 39 is written as 3, then 10, then 5, then 4. You can also count by 2 fives, 3 fives, all the way up to 9 fives. You can represent a thousand as either a thousand, or 10 hundreds. Lastly, *nyan* is not a "million." Rather, it's a vague number for a large amount. After a hundred thousand (*ank-mille*), you say *mille-nyan* (because it sounds like million), then *bil mille-nyan* for two million, while *bil bil-nyan* is two billion (it should be written with a clear space or something, as *kat-nyan* is a quadrillion).

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Unified Japanese

The aim of a language ought to be to aid in understanding of its speakers. As such, Japanese has paradoxically tried to add words, symbols, and concepts to its language, instead complicating itself even more. Japanese should instead aim for a distinct cultural identity, leaving English and *kanji* at the doorstep. This massively simplifies the language so that new speakers actually have a chance of connecting with Japanese. As it is, Japanese has effectively multiple "languages": joseigo ("woman's" Japanese), danseigo ("men's" Japanese), formal Japanese (when addressing superiors), as well as borrowed expressions from Chinese, English, and German. This is a mess.

My solution? Make all words based on syllables or sounds, and have only two sets of script: katakana for main sounds, and hiragana for Japanese articles such as *no*, *wa*, and *to*. All kanji, honorifics, and the like should be removed. I propose adding back in three honorifics (one to denote that one is speaking to a deity, one to denote one is speaking to an enemy, and one to address one's lover). There are limited kanji for numbers. Another major difference is that sounds are always the same. You don't have the phenomenon of something spelled *konnichiha* but pronounced *konnichiwa*.

Base Syllables

So, first the base syllables of Unified Japanese:

A	I	U	E	O
ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
Ka	Ki	Ku	Ke	Ko
カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
Sa	Shi	Su	Se	So
サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
Ta	Chi	Tsu	Te	To
タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
Na	Ni	Nu	Ne	No
ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
Ha	Hi	Fu	He	Ho
ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
Ya	Yu	Yo	V	N
ヤ	ユ	ヨ	ヴ	ン
Ma	Mi	Mu	Me	Mo
マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
Ra	Ri	Ru	Re	Ro

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ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
Wa	Wi	We	Wo	
ワ	ヰ	ヱ	ヲ	
Ga	Gi	Gu	Ge	Go
ガ	ギ	グ	ゲ	ゴ
Za	Ji	Zu	Ze	Zo
ザ	ジ	ズ	ゼ	ゾ
Da	Dji	Dzu	De	Do
ダ	ヂ	ヅ	デ	ド
Ba	Bi	Bu	Be	Bo
バ	ビ	ブ	ベ	ボ
Pa	Pi	Pu	Pe	Po
パ	ピ	プ	ペ	ポ

Articles and Sounds

Then, we have words that are used as sounds or as articles. For example, "Aaaaa!" when surprised is just a repeating ああああああ sound. Other words are used to denote either complete articles like *no* (の) or *wa* (always わ, never は) or are combined to make articles such as *desu* (です). Some of these are articles are verb-related. For instance, *wa* is used when something always is the case, whereas *ga* is used if something is happening to make something the case. Some of these are filled in with the article meaning, but my Japanese is rather limited so not all of these.

A	I	U	E	O
あ	い	う	え	お
Ka (question)	Ki	Ku	Ke	Ko
か	き	く	け	こ
Sa	Shi	Su	Se	So
さ	し	す	せ	そ
Ta	Chi	Tsu	Te (conjunct.)	To (and)
た	ち	つ	て	と

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Na	Ni (location)	Nu	Ne	No (possess.)
な	に	ぬ	ね	の
Ha	Hi	Fu	He	Ho
は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
Ya	Yu	Yo	N (stop)	N (negative)
や	ゆ	よ	っ	ん
Ma	Mi	Mu	Me	Mo (also)
ま	み	む	め	も
Ra	Ri	Ru	Re	Ro
ら	り	る	れ	ろ
Wa (topic)		Wi	We	Wo
わ		ゐ	ゑ	を
Ga (v. topic)	Gi	Gu	Ge	Go
が	ぎ	ぐ	げ	ご
Za	Ji	Zu	Ze	Zo
ざ	じ	ず	ぜ	ぞ
Da (to be)	Dji	Dzu	De (v. location)	Do
だ	ぢ	づ	で	ど
Ba	Bi	Bu	Be	Bo
ば	び	ぶ	べ	ぼ
Pa	Pi	Pu	Pe	Po
ぱ	ぴ	ぷ	ぺ	ぽ

Numbers

These are the numbers in Unified Japanese. They are the only remaining examples of *kanji*.

Ichi (1)	Ni (2)	San (3)	Shi (4)	Go (5)
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一	二	三	四	五
Roku (6)	Nana (7)	Hachi (8)	Kyu (9)	Ju (ten)
六	七	八	九	十
Rei (0)	Hyaku (hundred)	Sen (thousand)	Man (ten thousand)	Juman (hun. thousand)
零	百	千	万	十万
Hyakuman (million)	Senman (ten million)	Oku (hun. million)	Ju-oku (billion)	Cho (trillion)
百万	千万	億	十億	兆

The number system uses places to determine numbers, unlike the Indian "Arabic" number system. That is, to say 23, it is 二十三, as the tens place is held between the two numbers.

Natural Language

The point of this section is that language itself seems to have arisen from thin air. When trying to make characters and then make sounds for them, I came to the conclusion that there is no reason why "su" or "tu" should be connected to this or that character. There are arbitrary choices, ideas springing from the mind. Which leads to the next section...

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Part 2: Falsehoods

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Division of Language

The story of Babel is an informative lesson, though most people clearly do not understand what is trying to be taught here. In Genesis, we are told that the language of Earth is united. But then humans tried to defy God in order to build a tower. Further reading outside the Bible reveals that Nimrod, one of the descendants of Noah, desired to turn people away from God through the means of tyranny and got people to work on this tower as a precaution against other floods. We are informed of two things here: (1) contrary to the depiction of God by atheists as a control freak, it is actually humans that create laws and oppression, as shown by the decision to have kings and a temple in Israel; (2) the purpose of this structure was to disobey God.

In punishment, the people are made so they cannot understand things. Now, let's review the history of the Jews. At around the time of the first five books or so of the Bible, when the people had a personal relationship with God, they were using Ancient Hebrew. These older texts (especially Genesis), reveal a God who is incarnate and even able to take human form. We see this in the story of Lot in Sodom & Gomorrah, we see it with Jacob wrestling, and we see it with Adam. Then we have the text changing around the time of the Exile to Babylon. Although there is technically a later version of Hebrew after this, the more important change is the addition of vowel sounds.

Importantly, many of these displaced older meanings of passage. Such changes happened over time as a result of rejecting God's Messiah. For example, the vowel sounds turn "they pierced my hands and feet" into "like a lion, my hands and feet." In other words, as righteous humans turned away from the worship of God, their very words were distorted so that they were not involved in belief in Messiah. In this case, I suspect it was intentional, but this effect is marked in both the Christian fundamentalist and Jewish sects, both of these use the newer text as the source of their translation. In much the same way, if I am not saying what God wants, it often seems as though my thoughts become garbled.

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Understanding of Science

Like language and history, the original purpose of science meant to know. Science never made much progress outside the Western world, and this is an observable fact. This is because the foundation of science depends on the idea that the world is created according to an intelligent design, and can thus be studied. For years, science thus depended on religion. We knew the Earth was flat, as we could observe the sun rise and fall due to perspective. We knew there was buoyancy both in charge of objects in the water, and objects in the air. Before flying machines from the Wright Brothers, we had hot air balloons. In fact, as far back as the 2nd century BC, the Chinese had lanterns that were floated into the sky for military signals. We knew the Earth was created, because the idea that something can exist uncreated is absurd. We know the shortest distance between points is a line, and that there appears to be a straight horizon in all directions.

Then science became divorced from the common sense granted by God. Despite seeing a flat horizon, people believed pictures shown by NASA instead. Despite that nothing can come from nothing, people thought it sensible that the Big Bang can still work without God in the equation. Despite thousands of years of burning wood with no ill effects, and understanding of the theory of photosynthesis, we are told that somehow the climate will change and kill us all. This after numerous similar predictions have failed. Ironically, the most devastating action against the environment is tearing down trees (not burning fuel), which is done far more often when building "eco-friendly" sources of power like wind turbines or solar cells. In fact, these turbines cut birds into ribbons, and the solar cells have sharp shards of graphene that can hurt fish if they make it to the water.

Today, our science has abandoned the scientific method, the system of testing facts against repeated experiments. It has even abandoned common sense. What is called "science" now tells us to believe in it, and trust it. By definition, this is exactly the characteristics of a religion, not a science. Science is about knowing things, and you cannot do this if your foundation of knowledge is a lie, that nothing created things yet they somehow exist and are organized. A single leaf of grass is more complicated than anything that could be made in a laboratory, with carbon chains stretching forever. DNA is such that not a single form of life has ever been made in a lab, and I don't see that changing (even if it did, this would by definition be proof that design is intelligent). Yet these "scientists" insist that by 2030, we all will be immortal. Yeah uhhh, we also thought we'd have hoverboards by 2015, but instead kids had to be told not to eat Tide Pods.

I read about Greek society, and how their science progressed. The history book talked about how although ancient Greek society seemed as though it had potential for science, it got to a certain point and they just used science to prop up political or philosophical teachings instead of accepting understanding of the world where it led. This is identical to what is happening now. Real scientists like Tesla are outmoded by theoretical scientists like Hawking. These theories are good for Marvel Comic Universe films about quantum physics, but somehow no new inventions are made with such ideas. Has even one invention been made using the idea of quantum entanglement? And has Hawking ever actually proven that we can dispense with God?

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Recording of History

It is no mystery then that our history has also been distorted to suit humans rather than to perform the true role of history. History refers to "His story". The entirety of history is about how the world was created from nothing, formed into a ball of fire, covered with water, we finally had dry land. There was water in the firmament protecting us from radiation, and giving us long lives. But God turned "easy mode" off with the flood, using the water in the firmament to dispense with the pollution and radiation we created through great evil. Ancient Hindu texts reveal nuclear wars and a weapon called the Brahmastra. Instead we pretend there was no history until after 4000 BC. Why? Because Muslims think the world was made 6000 years ago. And largely secular roaming barbarians that have been crucifying Christians and killing people for around 1200 years couldn't be wrong. Or while we're talking about Muslims, that the reason for the Crusades *obviously* had nothing to do with fighting them after they trashed the Hagia Sophia and nearly extincted the development of Western culture and technology, but some fairy tale about looking for the Holy Grail. Or that America was really about slavery because some woke people said America really started with slave ships in 1619, not 1776 with the Declaration of Independence, with its discovery by Christopher Columbus or Lief Erikson. Yes, "history is (often) written by the winners" but the real story of History is how God loved us enough to become part of us, and died on the cross in order that we could know forgiveness for sins. All the crap about how we are overlooking indigenous peoples or black people is just that. None of this is history. We don't have to care about Native Americans. They are and have always been a Stone Age culture. We came to America to find new land, and were met by people who attacked us. Any triumphs came from being able to convince them to work together with us, but all the guilt trips about how Thanksgiving was a celebration of the massacre of Native Americans... no it wasn't! It was a celebration of surviving the harvest season. It was a celebration of unity with different people. History came when the light of civilization spread between cultures. Likewise, the Civil War had the end goal of ending slavery and unifying blacks and whites. The idea of instead shaming people and trying to stir up disharmony instead of moving toward racial peace and unity is crap. And the idea of "celebrating" backwardness is a load of crap. This is not to say that Western culture developed in a vacuum. It was through trade routes between India and China with the West that much of culture developed, just as the Iron Age came about from trade (and invasion) between Rome and other countries. If we do not understand God's plan, His Story, then we are doomed to glorify savages. But His Story is about their redemption, how people in remote regions managed to have good medicine, running water, and the ability to live a full life, not to behave as though living in a cramped hut that leaks while heat or cold threatens your life is what God intended. We are indeed to help those in other countries, but not to glorify them or try to import their backwardness. We are here to lift others up, not be dragged back into bygone ages. This is not to say technology for technology's sake, I'm talking more about cultural progress away from things like slavery, polygamy, and child molestation. We are given freedom by God and it is up to us to find a balance between our history and our future, neither forgetting the one nor leading the other into ruinous extremes. To live in harmony with nature, yes, but not to force ourselves to live in a hut. "Progressives" tell us they are progressive, but all of woke culture attempts to impose backwardness. It was progress that slavery ended. It is progress that women and blacks can now hold property, work any job they wish, and so on. When religion tells you to sacrifice in order for the good of others, reject it. Even if they call it "altruism." Charity is all very good, and you should indeed do it, but God desires mercy not sacrifice. So if your charity actually puts you in a position where you are suffering in place of those you thought to help, remember that mercy is what God desires, not sacrifice. He will have mercy. Stop the sacrifice.

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Part 3: Search for Meaning

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Freedom vs Psychopathy

Perhaps one of the biggest temptations of a religion like mine that doesn't assign a lot of rules is that one thinks, "Well I can go do whatever I want. I mean, there's no law against certain things, so what's to stop me from killing my father, having sex with my mother, and leaving a trail of rape and murder behind me? It's just a different type of Aiken. My ideas are all equally valid to yours." Ummm, that line of thought will probably eventually be something I'd have to deal with, so let's nip it in the bud. Basically, just because you can in theory do anything, it doesn't mean that everything is equally good for you. No, I don't believe that God has Hell reserved for us, I believe he universally loves us, but on this Earth there are natural consequences. If I decide to masturbate every day until I die, I will probably spend my last days sexually exhausted. If I murder people, it warps me spiritually. And the basic idea of Aiken is the idea of consent, of not using freedom in order to take the freedom away from others (the short version is known as "don't be an asshole"). Yes, if you and your mother are very close, you could have sex with her. But things like incest and polygamy screw with family dynamic, making jealous partners or broken homes, or siblings that are children as well. To say nothing about legality. I will not condemn you, but these things have issues of their own. What is important to realize is that there are plenty who condemn themselves their whole lives. This doesn't mean to combat that thinking with the opposite extreme. We should keep in mind that we are imperfect, but not condemned.

This section, I am trying to appeal to the idea that someone has already taken my ideas to an unwanted extreme. That is, I am supposing that one of my followers took my idea of an open-ended religion, and instead applied it in a narcissistic or psychopathic extreme, and so I will explain not in terms of **sin** or **karma**, but in terms of **regret**. From what I've read of such people, they think in terms of rewards and not risks. Regret is the state of not having what you want. So if you murder your whole family, the immediate regret is that you will be all alone and have nobody to talk to, and handle all of their problems yourself. If you rape an entire village, expect to get an STD or two, as well as having a village angry at you. Regret is not simply about not disobeying laws though. There are plenty of people whose greatest regret was that they followed all the rules, and never got any joy. Hurting yourself or others always produces regret. Freedom works best when there is no regret. This means learning what life can give you, and what hurts you.

The Quest for Meaning (WIP)

I came up with Aiken around the time where I was studying different religions. My primary faith was Episcopal, but I was fascinated with Taoism, then Buddhism. I studied these texts as comparative religion, trying to make sense of life. But for a great deal of my life I was beset by confusion and often depression. I came up with Aiken as a way to answer this question, "What is the meaning of life?" So I turned the question back on itself, "The meaning for life is the search for meaning." That is, everyone who lives develops a working meaning for life, even if it is not the real one. This meaning, like a set of dominoes being pushed, is either sturdy enough to hold together, or it falls over. And much like a domino rally, just because that one failed doesn't mean you can't pick them up and build something new.

Of Taoism, I learned about the Yin and Yang, and about the sense of balance in the world, and how to live a harmonious life. To be honest, this was harder than it sounded, as I always felt deeply out of balance in my life. I tried to blend this with Christianity, as I felt that many of the fundamentalist denominations of Christianity had no chill. Over time, I also studied Buddhism, particularly stuff about the Desire Realm. I think my biggest problem was that it was a bit like a library with plenty of books to read but no idea what to pick. What one religion says contradicts another, and it led to a feeling that I couldn't get answers. In around 2011, it was this quest for meaning that led me to Kira. Over time, I continued meeting her in apparently different forms, and gradually equated this to Jesus. Just as we know of God through his presence through the people we meet, this began to be the common thread in these different religious ideas. Like the Tao, I didn't experience a wholly good person but rather someone more like a unity of good and bad. There was a sense of realness that

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wasn't present from the texts where Jesus was thought to have no sin. Yet neither did it feel like a false version of Jesus. I learned about grace from the imperfections and flaws they had, but how they cared for me when I was troubled.

Truth and Lies

One of the struggles with Aiken is determining what truth is. Aiken is about finding one's heart truth, and it is very tempting to walk around with the idea that because everyone might have a different truth, that any belief is as good as any other. But I'm not sure this is so.

There are two types of truth: objective truth and subjective truth. Unfortunately, objective truth is difficult to pin down. We are certain that two and two are objectively four, and anyone trying to tell you different is messing with your mind. The problem is that many things about objective truth are based on arbitrary ideas. While two deer meeting two more deer is clearly double the deer (and thus four), those numbers were named. In other times, like the Earth being round, it may seem that it is easy to prove objectively, but we actually have no real evidence (I suspect that one's false by the way the horizon behaves). Subjective truth is somewhat ironic, in that unlike objective truth, it actually can be objectively known to be true. The problem is, it is only objectively true on a personal level. That is, if I go my whole life and nobody loves me, then I can believe that, and it is true if it bears out. However, if I think people love me and they don't, or I think people hate me and they don't, this is a subjective truth that is objectively wrong. I hope that made some sense. The bottom line is that subjective truth can be said to be true or false based on whether it matches personal experience, whereas objective truth conforms to shared reality. If objective truth is based on lies (for example, if NASA fakes moon pictures) we call that a lie. Likewise, if your personal experiences are based on people keeping you inside a false reality, that is a real experience, but the world you see is not.

God in Self vs God as Self

One of the main plot points of *Oracle of Tao* was that Ambrosia was basically God. Since God was stand-in for the author, I was making her an avatar of myself as a writer, the hero of the story. But over time, I actually identified more with Nevras, the secondary hero. I think I wanted someone to love who would be like Ambrosia, but increasingly felt like the hero wasn't really who I was. And then I wrote the sequel to this, *In The Moment*. In this one, Ambrosia's bad choice is screwing with her mind, and she is caught in a maze of memories and alternate versions of her reality. The important thing I discovered when writing this was that Ambrosia imagined herself as God, and God in fact allowed her to be ruler of her life. But more like the saying "Jesus take the wheel," the idea of always being the one in charge of your reality is depressing. If you always make the decisions, you are always responsible for the results. But for Jesus always to take the wheel is equally depressing. You see tyrannies where people abdicate all responsibilities over their own life. Rather, we need to understand that God is in us, but isn't wholly us. We need to understand that we are in the car with God, neither in charge nor strictly passive, but rather drivers together on a vacation. Human relationship with God is meant as a couple. Ideally, we form a good partnership with God.

Divine Duality Dream

One of the issues of Aiken is dealing with contradiction. Unlike Islam with its abrogation approach to newer text (basically "Allah told me this (I made this up), but earlier passages contradict later ones... forget what Allah (I) said earlier, Allah (I) really meant this"), Aiken instead takes the approach "this but this and this?" in other words, the reader unless it's something serious like "don't go around killing people" can pick and choose either combining ideas or choosing what makes the most sense. Why am I bringing this up? Well, because this passage immediately relates with the section above it, and possibly contradicts it.

I was having a bad day the other day, where basically everything was going on. The lawnmower wouldn't start, and attempts to fix it were fruitless. I was very shaken up about this, worse so after a

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major rejection from a girl I liked than I would be in years past. And I got to wondering "why does suffering exist in this world if God created it and is all-powerful?" I was picking berries later than day, and a strange idea occurred to me. Maybe God didn't create the world. Maybe we did. The Divine Duality Dream is a sort of paradox, as it effectively asserts that we humans are God, but at the same time asserts we are *not* God. That the world is real but also that it is *not* real. When we say God created the Earth and human beings, what we mean is that God created a spiritual reality in order to make a being that is of God but separate (basically, the idea that God is making a girlfriend for himself). In order to do this requires a self-sustaining dream, and then making it real. We humans subconsciously create a physical world around that spiritual reality, and because it's our dream but we are not always in lockstep with God, the things we make are imperfect. For example, water nourishes our bodies, but is actually poisonous to them, hence why we drown in water. The same is true of sunlight or air or salt or sugar. We are living in a "real" dream where things hurt us, things break down, or people leave us. It is a partnership with God, where we create things with our subconscious because we are God. And yet, we are not God. We need help from outside, as everything we make is imperfect, and destined to die or fall apart. Misfortune exists along with all the good things, because this is our dream and it's not. It's our dream, and walk around trying to be the hero of it, but ultimately it's not our dream. This is a good thing. If we were all alone in this life, life would be a complete mess.

Princess Zelda vs Light Dragon

One of the main plot points of the latest *Legend of Zelda* game (*Tears of the Kingdom*) was that we don't really know Zelda very well. Over the course of the story, we find many sightings of "Zelda," but while some of these are things she said when she traveled the country between games, still others of these sightings are false versions of Zelda. She seems like Zelda in every regard, from her face to her voice, but it turns out this Zelda is an evil puppet. From the Dragon's Tears, we discover the real one is stuck in the distant past, and eventually we find out that she turned into an immortal dragon. In the same way, I was coping with a breakup (of sorts, I've never had a real girlfriend, but I have had many long term friendships that were sorta more than friends but not really close to being a couple). I had been concerned about my friend moving away, and her boyfriend sounded like he was not likely to likewise move close to be with her, so the concern was that she was wasting huge amounts of her time and her money. Anyway, after I told her this, she blew me off. Sometimes we see Jesus in the person we care for. But like this Princess Zelda, this physical embodiment can be imperfect because this world is imperfect. We can dwell on their past deeds, and get caught up in an idealized version of them. We can see them at work or hear their voice or see them online and be convinced that they are the one. But Jesus tells us that there won't be marriages in the Afterlife. This is not to say love won't exist. The physical people we marry on Earth are a pale shadow of the union we have to Jesus. Just as the physical people who remind us of Jesus let us down when compared with the Jesus who is not bound by a physical body. Even humans are idols when compared with cool immortal dragon Jesus. Likewise, we see paintings of Jesus. But Jesus doesn't actually look like that. That's an artist's depiction. We ought to see God as someone to trust, but at the same time understand that God is capable bringing both good and bad to our lives. But the bad isn't mean spirited, like an abusive boyfriend (as atheists seem to think). Rather, we ought to trust God neither as we do government (to me, that's not at all), nor as an abusive boyfriend, but as though we are interacting with a fox spirit. The fox spirit has different values and sense of boundaries than us, but cares for us deeply, having lived with us for years. You may expect tricks from God, but his purpose is to teach and not harm us. Even death is only there because our mortal bodies are... well, mortal.

Immortality?

One of the fascinations of humanity is the idea of immortality. But is such a thing even desirable? Probably not. You see, most talk of immortality comes at the end of some cultivation system. All of

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that is fine, as a person has presumably "earned" their immortality. Of course, you can't actually earn immortality, but if you're talking in theoreticals, it is possible for a human to reach a state of balance. The idea of sin is that knowledge of good and evil condemns you, and if you were to somehow deal with that properly where you no longer were bound by knowledge of good and evil (returning to the virtue of Eden), you could qualify for immortality. But putting aside for a moment why I'm not sure this would work, I can very definitely tell why a cheap medicine wouldn't work. I once read a book called *Amber & Iron*, about this girl named Mina who actually was a deity, but she wasn't aware of this. She worked with the death god Chemosh to make a new time of undead, and her idea was to make something closely resembling human but unable to die (strangely, vampires didn't seem part of the system). The problem? Well, the same problem as in Eden. Knowledge of good & evil plus immortality is an unwanted combination. They ate, they drank, they had sex, but their urges weren't really satisfying. Either there is sin and sin leads to our downfall, or we live in awareness that nothing is really all that good when you can't die or grow old. Ultimately, when she asked why none of them were happy with being "gods", one of the other characters mentioned that she basically trapped them in their bodies and threw away the key. Death is an essential part of life. We learn the lessons of our life (or we don't), we move on into an Afterlife, and maybe we come back or maybe other beings share our energy. I'm not sure, but I know that extending physical life is not that cool.

About Suicide

But this in turn brings up an important point. If the goal is not really about living for the sake of living, is it better to die? Having struggled with depression, I don't think throwing your life away is what we are on this Earth to do. Rather what the writer of Ecclesiastes said is a better model. This world has many pointless things to it, but you can seek to make meaning from a meaningless life. This means trying to live as long as you wish, but also being able to choose the terms of your own life and death. Death is neither to be sought nor to be feared. Death should not be sought in haste because life often does get better, nor should it be feared as there is an Afterlife.

There are some implications to suicide though. It does hurt loved ones, family, and friends. One of the times you definitely should not be committing suicide though is when death seems to be the only option. That's demons talking. Death is an option, but it should be made knowing you have a choice. As for whether suicide is good or bad, it is more accurate to simply say that while most who are killed are unwilling, the person in a suicide is willing. Consent above all other things is a tenet of Aiken, and as such it is permitted. However, this is not always the case. It is possible to be *driven* to suicide, reaching a point whether one feels fear or despair, or in some way emotionally cornered. In this case, you have not actually committed suicide but are murdered. One should seek to live without regret, so that life is an old friend when your life finally comes to an end.

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Part 4: Creed

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Salvation Theory

Aiken combines Taoist, Christian, and Buddhist theories of salvation (soteriology).

On the Taoist front, we have knowledge of good and evil, but the Tao is about seeing things as they are rather than naming them "good" and "evil." Because human beings are by nature unsatisfied, they are bored with good and abhor evil, therefore life displeases them and they sin. It is possible (though rare) to become an immortal in this life, by cultivation of the spirit in transcendence of good and evil. It is also possible to do so through unsavory methods, though this creates monsters (commonly known as *ashura*, though this term also applies to one of the Six Paths of mortal life) as one is immortal while still being tainted by good and evil.

As for the Buddhist theories, in this life, we try to overcome past mistakes. We have an Afterlife, but it is entirely possible that we repeat this life through time loops (I call this **reiteration**), until we are ready to seriously consider the idea of salvation. Unlike Buddhists, I do not believe in rebirth (which maintains the soul is destroyed each time and that we somehow plod through life without any memories to somehow find salvation), nor do I see the goal as extinction but rather finally achieving a satisfying rebirth.

Which leads us to Christianity, I guess. On our own, no amount of rebirths or reiterations would be enough to get things right. For example, if the goal for my life would be to be married or have a profitable job so my parents are at peace, I kinda failed on both counts. It is because of the impossibility of measuring up that we need a Savior. On our own, our sins would be such that we should be snuffed from existence (much like atheists imagine). It is for this reason that Jesus died on the cross, in order to grant us an Afterlife. But the how of this is more complicated, so I'll discuss it under Atonement Theory.

Aiken merges these above concepts to the idea of free will. We are given choice in this world. This affects our Afterlife. However, there is no such thing as everlasting punishment. How can this work? Well, the reality of the Afterlife is that God will not punish us, but we can delude ourselves into believing God hates us. This delusion is temporary, but our Afterlife lasts as long as we allow it, much like a lucid dream. As horrible as "Hell" seems, it only lasts until we are aware that it is not real, then what remains is our real Afterlife. Jesus died so that we are not trapped in this delusion.

Atonement Theory

Atonement Theory asks the question, "What exactly did Jesus dying on the cross do?" There are many such theories floating around such as penal atonement (humans sinned, and Jesus paid the penalty), moral transformation (that God was already loving, and Jesus dying on the cross showed this), and so on. But I actually have my own theory. Lacking a theological-sounding name, I call it the Velveteen Rabbit Theory of Atonement (what?) as this most typifies what happened.

It goes like this. We humans have sins which cause us to die. We are by nature flawed. But our greatest sin is that we are creations. In Eden, we were living in a spirit world with no good or evil. By choosing to live, we are out of balance with eternity, living and dying instead of being immortal, doing good or evil instead of neutrality. As creations, we are like a toy bunny, totally unlike the boy in the story or even like a real bunny. As such, we cannot even have an Afterlife, much less one where we see ourselves being punished. Human beings are mere things until God intervened. He not only showed the world (through Jesus) that there is an Afterlife by raising the dead, but Jesus died in order to become part of the fabric of humanity. We humans turned from toy bunnies into real bunnies, so to speak.

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Fate or Choice?

Aiken rejects Calvinism and Islam. We have a choice whether to accept God or not, though God in turn has chosen us. In this way, fate and choice are constantly in effect. Likewise, all our decisions are known by God, but we can reject them or accept them. This means that I could become a doctor, lawyer, or priest but God would have a plan for me based on *each* of these plans. Should we choose God, we know who he is and that he loves us. If we reject God, we are filled by various delusions, choosing instead the distorted musings of our minds. I have seen this deluded mindset, and there is a sense of being deeply unhappy but not knowing how to fill this sense of emptiness. God is nonetheless in our lives, yet we might not be able to recognize him. We might be filled by anger or some manner of hysteria. We always have choices, but God chooses us.

Unconditional or Conditional Salvation?

As I say, Aiken rejects Calvinism and Islam. In particular, Calvinism and Islam seem to promote a wishy-washy idea of fate. That it is God's (or Allah's) will for things to happen. In particular, the notion that certain people or groups are saved and that the rest are incorrigible is something anathema to me. But even without fatalism, the idea that some people are righteous and the rest didn't make the cut doesn't actually jive with scripture. All of us are without exception imperfect enough not to have any sort of Afterlife. If Jesus saved anyone then, he must have saved everyone, otherwise he died for nothing. And that's not something I accept.

Trinity or Unity?

Strictly speaking, the Trinity is not really necessary to Aiken. Aiken can be either Trinitarian or Unitarian, with no sense that God sends you anywhere if you believe the wrong thing. I've already mentioned that I believe in universal salvation. All the same, I guess the question does deserve an answer. I reject the notion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because it sounds too much like this Catholic service I attended where they talked about the Holy Family. Having read about other religions, Catholicism appears to be a secret cult of Ishtar, Baal, and Tammuz. I reject the sort of Trinity that puts God into three separate categories similar to a family of deities.

And so, I instead propose a United Trinity. That is, ultimately there is only God, as Christians know his name as Jesus. He is Creator, Savior, and Spirit. There's no actual split. God didn't sacrifice his Son like an abusive Father, but rather he gave his own life. In the same way, Jesus is a Spirit inside each of us at all times. We see a separation between these three aspects of Jesus, but actually they are all one and the same. God is not a Trinity nor a Unity, but a United Trinity.

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Nature of God

Much of Christianity talks about God being wholly good, and the reason for evil being that God is fighting the Devil. But that's not actually biblical! Nor is it something Aiken believes. Rather, Aiken believes that God is in charge of both good and evil, referencing Isaiah 45:7. "I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things." You see, Satan does not actually have the power to do evil. This is an idea that was lifted from Zoroastrianism, and is not actually Christian at all. Taoism and Judaism both state that it is God in charge of misfortune, but because of a number of heresies and groups distorting Christian ideas, somehow they didn't get the memo.

This is not to say God is evil. Rather all things, good and evil, are made for our growth. Satan's own goal is to accuse us rather than tempt us or work evil. It is through this accusation that most of our distorted thinking comes from (and thus evil), but it is also through this accusation that we are able to see the curse of the law. Because we know we are accused (for example, we have a tooth lost due to too much sugar eaten), we are able to change behavior and grow, or learn to accept things. Either choice is acceptable. God at his very base is very much like the Tao. He sets good and bad things in front of us, and we can choose how we deal with them. He loves us, and he wants the bad things to help us as much as the good. Hardship creates growth, ease creates comfort. When we see that all is good, what in this Earth do we have to fear?

Lastly, it is important not to think of God as some sort of impersonal force (unlike the Tao), but rather a person who cares for us. This means that unlike some models where if I do something, expecting God to bless us, he may or may not be interested. We can't barter for God's affection through sacrifice systems. Indeed, God is capable of teasing or trolling us, just as easily as he is capable of blessing or protecting us. I would like to refer you to the Triforce system of the *Legend of Zelda* franchise. While Hylian faith is not a totally accurate model, the recurring theme is that there is a Hero, Princess, and Monster as part of the Triforce. Typically, we are the heroes of our life. At least, that's how we tend to play the game. But how we relate to God is as either the Princess or the Monster. God is seen either as a lover or an antagonist to our plans as the heroes. In actuality, he is both. He wants us to grow as people and he wants to love us, so both of these roles are God's. Ultimately though, they are simply roles. God made this world for us to be in it with him.

Nature of the World

In addition to Christianity, Taoism, and Buddhism, I studied a few types of New Thought. Among them, yes I have seen a few Happy Science videos, and a few Spirit Science (including their Human History movie). And I was even in a cult once. One of the sects that I followed briefly was the Unity Church, more commonly known for their book, *A Course In Miracles*. One of the things they mention is that the world as it normally operates is basically hell. Basically, this world exists as an imperfect place in order to teach us lessons. Unfortunately, to those who have achieved immortality but not peace (dubbed *ashura* earlier), they remain trapped in a world that to their flawed perceptions seems better for other people. No, everyone is suffering, nobody manages to have a lasting happy relationship their whole life, nobody that is rich doesn't have to worry about some tax or fee or the like, but your jealousy makes things worse. More rules, more fees are added on because people can't be content with their lot in life, and compare themselves to others. The purpose of pain and suffering is growth, but many people never grow from their pain, instead trapped in misery. Or they depend on false hope, when they need to understand that this physical world is illusion. This life can be painful or blissful based on our perceptions, but we are usually motivated by thinking about what we don't have. In essence, the true nature of the world is like a glass of water that salt or sugar can be added to. In actuality, it's just water, but far too many of us are salty.

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Nature of Jesus

Now, not all Aiken believes in Jesus, because it is a highly personalized religion (making this true of many beliefs), but I happen to think the idea of a Savior is very important to understanding the role of humans and why we are in this world.

I actually fully believe that Jesus could have been present long before the official date he is supposed to have been alive. Why? Because there are Jesus archetypes before the proper Jesus. In other words, God approached us in human form numerous times in order to teach us that he cares for us.

However, he only was incarnate once. Yes, he did die for sins, but he also lived in order to form a bridge between Heaven and Earth, between God and humanity. The cross actually predates Christianity and this is exactly what it means, the bridge between Heaven and Earth. In other words, Jesus lived in order to give us a real Soul (Atman). There are other souls: *jiva* (living) and *ajiva* (existence) possessed by other things. For instance, a rock has only *ajiva* whereas a cat has *jiva* as well. But when a cat dies, it basically only reincarnates. The Afterlife is where real life happens.

As to the nature of Jesus, he was completely human (though an incarnation of God) during his life on Earth. But before and after this life, it would be appropriate to call him a human God. Jesus is able to change form, to appear as one or many people, to talk/act through other people (also known as the Body of Christ), and overcome the physical world (while he was able to eat, he also could bypass walls and doors). Suppose everyone were to forget about Jesus. Would it affect his mission of Grace? No, but his presence in the world would be more like a ghost than a man. Even so, if all the people on Earth died, Christ would not die. There is nothing that can thwart Jesus, or his forgiveness of all sin. And there is nothing that can destroy the Creation. And there is nothing that can remove God's Holy Spirit from this world. Jesus has established his kingdom and it cannot be overcome. But I don't find it helpful to see Jesus as a ghost or merely a part of his followers. To me, Jesus is best represented as fox spirit. Unlike the conventional depictions of Jesus as so long-haired hippie, this Jesus is capable of teasing us, behaving as a lover or a mentor or a trickster.

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Cosmology

Cosmology is the study of how things began. The truth is, despite having more than a few creation stories, we have only a best guess of how things started. Everyone, from Big Bang evolutionary scientist types to theists of various pagan religions has their own theory. In some cases, everything came from fire until the world formed into a massive tree. In others, the cosmos was formed from a large egg. My favorite is Shinto, where they equate creation to stirring a giant phallic pillar around, birthing islands one by one.

But regardless, the point is that we don't know how things happened. But that really isn't the point, what's important is *why* creation happened. Ultimately, we have a large hint when referring to biblical creation stories. We are told that God told us "It is not good for man to be alone." In other myths, the gods always interact with human beings. It is not that God or gods are so fragile as to need worship to exist. By definition, a real God (rather than an idol) does not fade away if forgot because the nature of being a deity is that one cannot be killed. Instead, all of these point to the social desire of God to connect with us humans. Without such, there would be no purpose for creation, no reason for generations of humans to mention miracles that they observed, and no point to existence at all. We are on this Earth because God wants to create a mate.

Eschatology

Eschatology is the study of end times. Unlike many religions, Aiken is amillenial, following Taoism and its opinion that such ideas are spiritually immature. That is, for the most part, Aiken doesn't believe in end times. The world will end when it has exhausted its existence, and if the meaning of the cosmology is that God created us to have someone to marry, the end result of all existence is that we are that lover. But for the most part, no, Aiken rejects nonsense about judgement days and punishing the wicked. After all, the core teaching of Aiken is free will. How could God punish us for choices that he gave us? If there is wrong about us, it will be cleansed or corrected, consuming the dross in order to let the gold that is our soul shine brighter. But ideas of wicked being punished are just sick fantasies of the bloodthirsty. If we wish others to be punished, we are at the top of the list of people needing to be punished. But no, God forgives us despite ourselves. This world is full of pain. But only our lives are intended to end, not the world itself. And even our death is not the end.

